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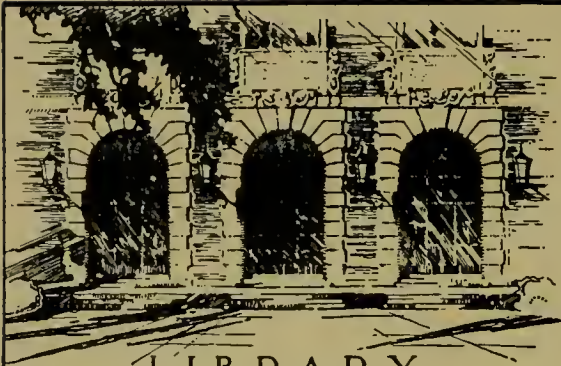
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LESCAR,
THE UNIVERSALIST.

VOL. II.



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LESCAR, THE UNIVERSALIST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“ARTISTE,” “BRIGHT MORNING,” ETC.

“ Enough! to speed a parting friend
’Tis vain alike to speak and listen;
Yet stay—these feeble accents blend
With rays of light from eyes that glisten.
Good-bye! once more; and kindly tell,
In words of peace, ‘the young world’s story.’
And say, besides, he loved *too* well
His mother’s soil, his father’s glory.”

OLIVER W. HOLMES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY,
1874.

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LONDON :
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,
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LESCAR,

THE UNIVERSALIST.

CHAPTER I.

“Panem et Circenses.”

PARIS, with the silver crest of an early autumn moon rising over the Champs Elysées, pale and faint in its lustre, because the rich glow of the departed sunset is still lingering with warm colour over the scene, still flashing upon the windows of the palaces, still glistening on the roofs and churches, on the water in the fountains, on the trees that sweep their rich foliage low over the dusty roads.

It has been all day hot and scorching. Busy, feverish, restless Paris has been very feverish and restless to-day; crowds hurrying along her streets, trade active in the gay shops, money rattling on the counters, life eager and excited, as usual, from end to end of the city, from the

earliest dawn of the morning, long ere the rising of the sun.

But now it is evening, and not yet night. It is an hour in all places, and peculiarly in Paris, when a sense of repose creeps insensibly over life. The vapour, rolling from the hot earth as the sun dies away, fills the air with a cloudy drowsiness, soon to change into the clear brilliancy of the moon and star light, shining from a soft blue cloudless sky.

The day's labour is over, the feverish brains and busy hands are free, and above all it has just been dinner-time, and Paris gasps for breath for one transient hour ; the lines of work are brushed from the weary foreheads, and they prepare for pleasure to begin.

From the dawn of to-day to the break of to-morrow, this is the one hour when these brains cease their whirling, and hearts their feverish throb. Since that sun rose, what labour and weariness, what sweat of the brow, what struggles of the brain, have been lived through, beneath its hot lustrous rays, as it shone on the vast city, with its crowd of eager humanity pursuing gain !

Ere it rise again—ah ! that other pursuit, yet more feverish, more wasting, more delirious, in which more human lives are hewn down, and

more fall and perish by the way,—the pursuit of pleasure.

“*Panem et circenses*”—bread and amusement, the old formula of a tottering Rome—is there nothing else worthy the powers of men?

Bread is a first necessity, and would that pleasure, refined and healthful, might mingle in every lot. Hungry multitudes crowd our cities—would we could give them bread! and melancholy multitudes of warped, distressed, and joyless humanity meet our saddened gaze on every side—beings with tastes and capabilities for happiness doomed to lives joyless, unbeauteous, and sad—would that all had the means in their hands to win the bread of support for this life; would that all had an healthful share of its joy!

Panem et circenses are deep necessities of our being. But—if men stop there, halt in the aspirations of their soul, in the effort of their hands, before these two objects, and agree to raise them to pinnacles of worship in the history of their nation or individually of themselves?

If gain becomes the god of a people, and pleasure its crown, then be sure the word has gone forth against that people—the gangrene of egotism has seized hold on them—all spiritual

nobility will sink day by day—the city, the people, the nation, corrupt and degraded, will inevitably perish. For man cannot live by bread alone, but by the word that cometh from on high,—by spiritual aspiration, by unselfish effort, by death of egotism, by life of self-sacrifice and self-control.

“*Panem et circenses*” is the last fatal warrant against a nation or single life; it was the utilitarian’s formula at the time of the fall of Rome.

Yet Paris, sweet Paris! gay and sun-lit, radiant with that wonderful evanescence of joyful vitality, that sparkling element of your own existence in which you gaily welcome all comers to participate—city of pleasure for the rich and for the poor—city to which busy careworn men of soberer and more murky climes look back tenderly in gratitude for the fresh draughts of joyous life drunk in thy sunshine. Beautiful Paris!

It is the last years of the second Empire, brilliant, triumphant years; with only sinister shadows creeping over the gorgeous horizon, with only muffled voices uttering ominous and unintelligible sounds. Apparently an acme had been attained of prosperity and universal enjoyment; contradictory and unpleasant sights were hidden carefully away.

Piers and Victor have arrived in Paris to-day. They lean side by side now on the balcony at an open window in a restaurant of the Champs Elysées; they are looking out at the characteristic scene—a scene soothing and suggestive, inspiring soft evening dreams through the beauty of that evening light. Soothing by that sense of stillness resting on the spirit after the noisy day. Suggestive because it *was* Paris, and a distant ceaseless murmur came from the living breathing crowd of humanity that was just there, beyond that green fringe of the Champs Elysées and across the waters of the moon-lit Seine.

As they leant side by side on the little wooden balcony, Piers was as usual very silent, and Victor's voice murmured soft and unceasing. He was thinking aloud, talking half to himself and only half to his friend.

“How I love Paris!” he said. “I love the shadowy beauty, creeping with the soft nightfall over the drooping foliage there, over the white palaces of the Champs Elysées—over the grand triumphal arch. I love the soft night wind, the tender thrill of the nightingales, the rich intoxicating scent of the sleeping flowers. It is wafted up to us from the garden there below; how rich their hues are! look at the scarlet, golden,

purple, and gentian blue. How slowly our cigar-smoke curls with a soft feathery vapour away over the scent-laden air ! How sweetly the echoes reach us of those voices in the Champs : they are voices of happy children, entranced with the familiar objects of the Elysian fields down there. Listen ! How soothing is that distant refrain of music ! They are beginning the Musard concert, in the space beyond that chestnut grove. There is always music in the air in Paris—sweet, bright, and joyous like her sunshine and herself. Life is set to music eternally here ; the heart sings in answer, and is irresistibly glad. Yes, I love bright Paris—the passionate heart of France. And I love France above all. Yes, study, travel, enlarge my view of human nature as I may, Piers, adopt the grand creed of a universal human union as strongly as my mind can seize its design, still it is only when I come back here, or when I think of it when far away, that I recognise again and again, as it rushes over me, as it overwhelms my heart and fills my eyes with tears, I recognise the strongest feeling of my life, the utter devotion with which I love this land of my fathers, and the strength of energy with which I could pour out my blood for its honour or its good. Love of France, under whatever rule she lies, is a

feeling much stronger with me, Piers, than any revolutionary ardour, or any socialistic dream; and it is so with my father as well. I love only her children *better* than herself. It is them I thirst to serve in this new Cause we are embracing, as *you* long to serve the nation that is yours. Her children, freed from the bondage of penury, redeemed from the curse of want, set in light places where they can walk safely, and be at peace, be happy, industrious, satisfied, and free,—smiling to life as we can smile, basking in blessing, as their richer brethren have basked so long,—with souls free and minds free to aspire to the higher life, with time and means and cultured capabilities to soar into the nobler spheres of the artistic, the spiritual, the ideal,—that is what I want for men and nations, and in this grand crusade France shall lead the world! Is there not something entrancing in this, Piers? Listen, look, feel—is it not delicious to live?”

Piers had been more than usually silent during these reveries of Victor; for, indeed, his mind weighted with a sense of new thoughts, new sensations, hitherto unconceived in his philosophies, that seemed to rush over him, and thrill his heart with new hilarious life. He could not un-

derstand it; it did not even occur to him to try : he enjoyed simply ; he leaned from the window, and gazed, and listened, and felt. He did not know what he felt, but it was something that made him a new man. An exhilarating brightness of existence, a joyousness in the fact of life, came to him with this sudden crowding of novel thought and sensation such as he never felt before. It was delicious and intoxicating : sensation was sufficient ; life was new—new in atmosphere, new in sound, sight, experience, in all the external influences that, little as we confess it, constitute the sovereign appeals to spontaneous sensation in our being ; that produce pleasure, the sweeter because unsought, that produce happiness of that abstract, unquestioned kind that springs up buoyant and delightful with mysterious irrelevancy to apparent or recognised cause, — a class of happiness that means, generally—youth.

These two had arrived in Paris that day. They had wandered through the Tuileries Gardens, across the Place de la Concorde, along the Avenue de l'Etoile ; and then they had dined together in the Champs Elysées, at one of those gaudy little cafés that nestle under the shadows of the broad chestnut-trees.

They had watched the warm sunshine flooding the gay many-coloured scene; they had lingered while it set with rich luxury of gold and amber over the city, while the last rays faded from the soft, tinted horizon, and the silver crescent rose in the blue depths of the darkening sky; and they lingered still, listening, gazing, talking in low tones,—Piers, as usual, simply responsive, content to listen, and to feel,—Victor's speech flowing with quick expression of these sentiments, philosophic and reflective, as well as poetic and heart-felt, that sprang up eager and spontaneous, as he yielded to the associations of his boyhood's home.

“The murky skies of Cambridge never gave us a sunset like this, Piers. Much as I love the brains of England, I am certainly true to the skies of France. How light it is, too!—it will not be really dark all night. What o'clock is it?—eight? It is time we were going to the Place St. Etienne.”

“Do they expect *me*, do you think?” said Piers, shyly.

“Oh yes, they do. I sent a note, directly we arrived at the hotel, to Faustine, and they will be longing to see us. I told them we would dine at my old friend Duleau's here, and that we should then stroll down.”

They were silent a moment.

“What is it, Vic.,” said Piers, suddenly, with an impulse of manner unusual to him—“what is it? The influence of the air?—the place? I do not know what it is, but I feel as I have never felt before. I seem to realise that I have chosen a new life—a new country almost, for the time being,—and to have at last left all my old self behind—my old Pollingworth self, I mean, that hated everything. It has been really living to me, at last, to see my way to a Cause I can serve; and I seem to-night first to realise it.”

“You have become a son of the Universal,” said Victor, lightly; “and the Universal is a child of Paris. You are enrolled among hers, and the bewitching mother is greeting your approach to her with the winning tenderness, the mysterious fascination, with which her children always feel she claims their hearts.”

He was looking round smilingly into his friend’s dark face, flushed as it was with unusual excitement and life.

“Piers, you will make a hero for us some day,” he said.

“If I ever do, Vic., you and Frederick and —— well, perhaps one other will have made me so.”

“My dear boy, no man can do that for his brother. Heroes are born, not made by influence. But you have something of one often in that stern, dark face of yours.”

“I feel sometimes I would do anything,” said Piers, “if I could only see what is the best thing to do. I feel that if I could grasp once and for ever the realization of a definite goal, that it is in me to count sacrifice and a life-long devotion as nothing in the scales against success.”

“The goal seems clear before us now,” said Victor. “In my own ideal of it, the clouds are clearing wonderfully away.”

“Yes; you have helped me much, Vic. At last I, too, see things that are to be done”

“If,” said Victor, with grave emphasis, “the men to *do* them are yet born upon the earth. Or perhaps—who knows?—we may have only reached the generation when man can conceive such things.”

“All great actions must begin with the idea of them,” said Piers.

“Yes, and the idea is here; the achievement is to come. But that is a depressing thought; we must not admit it. We are young: action, achievement, success, may be ours. Things go quick in these times. The blossom is now already,

and the rich harvest may crown our old age. But halt!—we shall have enough of metaphysical, philosophic, and political controversy before we have finished this evening. Come, let us go to Dax's now.”

CHAPTER II.

“ In all our Brittany
There’s not a fairer,
Nor can you fit any
Should you compare her.
Oft have I seen the sun,
To do her honour,
Fix himself at his noon
To look upon her.

“ When she looks out by night
The stars stand gazing,
Like comets to our sight
Fearfully blazing,
As wondering at her eyes,
With their much brightness,
Which so amaze the skies,
Dimming their lightness.”

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

IN a quiet little square, at the end of the Boulevard d’Auribeau, the waters of a clear fountain were throwing up their sparkling rays, and falling with a soft rippling cadence into their stone basin. A group of small chestnut, lilac, and laburnum trees clustered round the fountain, and edged the old jagged pavement with a fringe of

verdant shade. The sunshine had been beating here all the hot afternoon, and had lingered with its gold and amber tints over the trees, the fountain, and the gabled house, all those sweet hours while evening was sinking into night.

One arched doorway seemed still to glisten in the tender light, and one window just above the doorway shone with a wealth of snowy jasmine and scarlet passion-flower that even the departed sunlight could not throw into shade.

The framework of that window, and the living picture it framed, were enchanting with such a beauty of colour and contrast, that the little Place seemed bright with their radiance, even now, when the sun was nearly gone. The *jalousies* had been closed all day, during the scorching heat; but now they were flung open, and—Faustine stood there, breathing the cool air of the evening, with the last lingering rays falling on her beautiful bending head.

For Faustine was very beautiful. There was that in her beauty that induced comparison—an intense and indescribable poetry, a rich luxury of colour that suggested similitudes it was difficult to define. You never thought of a lily in looking at her—of that loveliness pale, dignified, and delicate; or of the rose with its blushing hues, all

soft and gay, all sun-lit and smiling; or of any flower, except the rich crimson passion-flower, such as clustered round her now in the window; and of one particular leaf—which is it?—dark, rich, and lustrous, soft as velvet when you touch its veined surface to your cheek, and fringed with an edge of thorns. It grows in wild abundance, clinging round the red rocks that hang, jagged and precipitous, high over the Mediterranean waves. It is a beautiful leaf, darker than the olive, richer than the bay, jagged and shaped curiously like the pointed ivy. Faustine's head looked as if destined by nature to be always crowned—and with *such* a wreath—beautiful and luxuriant—perhaps edged with thorns.

Do you remember the child of the workshop in Le Grand St. Marteau, draining the cogniac glass of bordeaux to the hopes of a Republic, with a flush of enthusiasm that roused echoes of stormy applause?

We have not followed her through the growth of that young tempestuous nature—through the latter years which her restless eagerness for new experiences, new fields for enterprise and observation, led her to spend in a self-appointed mission to convert the young English mind, spent in the schoolrooms of juvenile high-born Britons,

to whom she was at once a goddess and a tyrant, viewed at once with abject terror and admiring love. Unsuspecting parents, buried in the interests of the London world, knew little, and thought less, of that life within their schoolrooms, and of the strange dramatic scenes often enacted there. "Faustine inspired," as her pupils described her, sounded notes of inspiration that may echo strongly—still.

But that life soon wearied her. Those childish minds reflected nothing of the excitement and pathos of her own. Back she came, after sundry wanderings—after some curious glimpses of life—back to their new pretty home in the Place St. Etienne, to the old dreamy man who loved her there, and to her circle of rough, fiery-tongued adorers, to whom she, with her imperious mind and her glorious beauty, was at once sovereign and goddess—their conscience and their law.

The Universal, that once pure and beautiful dream, that vision all fair and unsullied of old Auber's brain, had spread widely now—had flowed far away from him; flowing, filtering, permeating through many lands. It had mingled with many currents; it had many a dark element staining its once fair aspect; it had many a vein of poisonous evil coursing through its mighty frame.

The Universal belongs to many lands now ; it has masters, leaders, teachers of every tongue and creed ; but here, in the Place St. Etienne, where people still clustered nightly, and talked their mingled jargon round the board of Auber Dax, the Universal meant—Faustine,—its prophetess and its queen ! Republican, atheist, revolutionary as many who crowded round her were, there was not one among them all who could push his anarchy to the point of revolution against the sovereignty of her beauty, or his cynical contempt to the disobedience to her glance or word. Republicans, they owned her their queen ; infidels, they worshipped her with the silent reverence with which men adore their God,—Faustine, “ the Damask Rose,” as some called her, of the Faubourg St. Etienne.

They called her so, though there *was* nothing of the soft blushing rose of Turkey about her : the passion-flower, and that thorn-edged creeper, the rich crimson shadowed by the dark lustre of the velvet leaf—that was her similitude.

But while human nature remains what it is, and instinctive human poetry speaks through us in simple, unconscious comparisons suggested by our daily life, men will go on, unvaryingly, likening the woman of their hearts’ love to some

kind of rose—the flower they love best, a beautiful, sweet, blooming, youth-like thing. But still Faustine was different.

She was known all over Paris ; she was known and feared. The world knew her ; and people watched for her tall, straight form passing down the Avenue Rocceau with the old man leaning on her vigorous arm, and a dark-eyed dreamy-looking man nearly always at her other side. People watched to look, if only for a moment, on the beauty of her Jewish face—to see those eyes, dark and liquid, flash their wondrous light with proud, indifferent glances, as she passed along ; and people whispered strangely of her, when she had gone a little way—

“ Old Dax’s grand-daughter ; and Dax was an eerie old man. Poor Henri Tolberg was bewitched with those jet-black eyes : there he was, with that sad, weary look of his hanging after her as usual, and she neither caring or heeding the poor fellow or his faithful love.”

The police knew her ; and Faustine’s erratic ways were watched by many lynx-like eyes. She knew it, and for Auber’s sake was careful. But the busy brain brewed mischief, the dark eyes flashed inspiration and dangerous light ; and if any conspirators, revolutionists, Universalists, or

other troublesome disaffected sons of the empire within twenty miles round the Place St. Etienne, had chosen to confess the name of his chief instigator and high priestess, he would have faltered—Faustine, with the memory of her beauty wreathing his lips with tenderness to the last moment of his life. And the police knew it, but by care and circumspection they were deprived of any handle against her yet.

She still trod the pavement of the faubourg with her firm reckless step, untouched and free, though the lynx eyes looked often with hungry and angered glances as she went by.

It was said of her, among her own surroundings, that those eyes could never soften to any real sweetness of a responsive love—that her cheek had never gained a deeper shade, her eyelids never drooped under any human gaze. Men loved Faustine; many and very different men loved her, with an eager sincerity of passion it was impossible to conceal. But Faustine could love no one, so it was said. Bright flashed her eye, proud was the carriage of her beautiful head, warm and passionate was the rich colouring that rushed ever changeful over her olive cheek; but none could boast that it deepened at their words, or that the glance had softened as it returned their gaze.

Proud, strong, indomitable young creature she appeared to them, as they looked on her beauty, as she moved among them, as they bowed and bent before her to obey.

There is no one to watch her *now*, however ; and—as that lingering after-glow falls upon her dark braided hair,—she is bending it low and earnestly, as it is never *seen* to bend. The rich face is quivering with strong feeling, the colour is deepening on her cheek, the eyes, that are wont to glisten so hardly, are softly shadowed by the long lashes, and are dewy with something strangely like—a woman's tear.

There is a large basket of flowers on the sill before her ; for Faustine, with the poetic taste of her southern nature, loves to have in this summer-time flowers everywhere—a lavish, boundless luxury of sweet-scented, bright-coloured flowers. And she always has them, for many are daily eager to minister to this, her one feminine taste. Flowers come to her in glorious profusion—rich-scented exotics, beautiful pyramids of roses, such as only fair France can at all times supply. Often baskets of wild flowers, the simple offering of distant rural friends ; and with all these she decked her rooms and Auber's, till they were bright with a beauty that seemed a fit setting for herself.

It was *one* of the strange contradictory bits of intense sweetness in her fiery nature, this passionate, almost childish, love of flowers. The other was :—

The basket before her to-night came from the country. The blue-bells and wild honeysuckles, sweet-scented violets and the pale brier-rose, had been plucked from banks edging some cool rippling stream far away in the forests, from hedges where the brier and boxwood, the alder and the white clematis, mingle wildly with the thorn. They have come to her this evening, into hot sultry Paris, borne by a bloused and saboted peasant, an emissary from the distant *terrain* of a faithful friend. They have come to her with the scent on them all fresh and dewy of the green country far away ; and among them nestled (perhaps from accident) a little rose-hearted, white-fringed, common marguerite—a daisy from the village green, a little simple thing, stolen in somehow with this rich offering to the proud Faustine.

And she had seized it, and over *it* bends that stately head ! the dark eyes are dewy, and, as she holds it, the firm hand trembles. A bitter smile, contradicting the yearning sweetness of her eyes, curves her lips, as half ashamed, half reluctant,

she plucks one snowy and delicate spike from the crimson centre, and still ashamed, still reluctant, she paused.

Faustine! the proud, reckless, heartless Faustine, what does she do, pulling the tender leaflets from the snowy disc? What! just the old, old tale, chanting the old words low to herself, with eyes soft as Gretchen's, with lip quivering as hers quivered, with a sigh as gentle and as laden with wistful love. She plucked the white leaves.

“Peut-être, il m'aime un peu,
Il m'aime un peu—beaucoup.
Ah! celui que j'aime, il m'aime un peu—
Passionément—non, pas de tout.”

She flung the flower down and broke into a hard laugh; she threw her head up and strove to throw off the soft influence that enthralled her. But it bent again: a moment her face was hidden in the clasp of two trembling hands; she swayed herself to and fro in the quick struggle for self-victory; a sigh, almost a sob, shook her frame, then—it was over. She looked up again with nothing in her eyes, but the piquant diablerie that commonly characterised them. She leaned out of the window on her brown shapely arms, and looked across the Place with a reckless and unrestful gaze.

Just then two figures entered, coming suddenly round the corner, beyond the fountain and the clustering trees; she could see them—in a moment they were below the window.

The summer twilight still lingered in the Place, and it fell on them as they stood below her—on the tall dark figure unknown to her, on the fair hair and on the sunny face of the other she knew so well. And it fell on her too, lighting up her beauty as she leaned there, her flower-basket on the sill before her, the green window-frame wreathing her dark face.

They came near; they stood below her; they paused; and Faustine, seized with a sudden impulse, stood upright, plunged her arms deep into the flower-basket, caught up a sweet burden of the violets, honeysuckles, and wild roses, and showered them upon their heads.

A gay laugh from Victor, as he caught the falling flowers, detected the assailant, and flung them back again; and profound silent astonishment from Piers, who stood with the violets and sweet wild things clinging to his hair and shoulders, looking up at the window, at the green framework, and the rich living picture there.

“Ah!” shouted Victor, “Faustine! La belle

Faustine, toujours méchante ! Je te salue, Faustine."

He picked up flower after flower, and flung them up to her again.

"This was France," Piers felt, with some austerity ; "and *this* was the accepted conduct of this sunny clime !"

"Come along, upstairs," cried Victor. "Do not let us stand to be pelted here. The rose-leaves have fallen, belle Faustine ; we only feel the thorns ;" and he pushed the door open and entered the little tiled hall.

"Come up," he repeated ; and he preceded Piers, mounting the stairs, and without hesitation he entered Faustine's room.

She turned from the window as he came in. Both were grave now, and the colour had faded from her cheek. It was two years since she had seen him. She came forward and held out both hands, and he took them in his with gentle courtesy, and pressed a kiss upon each.

"Faustine, we meet with *pleasure* again."

He looked down into her face, his eyes full of warm affection, his smile gentle and sweet ; and she looked up at him, those great *eyes* of hers, soft with strong *wistful* tenderness,—trying to speak her friendship,—striving to conceal her love !

They questioned his face with an eager gaze. *How* glad was he to see her again? Only just so glad! "We meet with pleasure," he said; and she—pleasure! Could the pain at her heart be called pleasure?—the mingled joy and pain with which she looked into his face once more be called by such a name? Pleasure! he met her with pleasure, his boyhood's friend—Faustine, but, but,—strange as it seemed—spite all her beauty, spite all the power with which she held dominion over other men, *he* had never bent his heart before her, he had never called her "queen," and she—only cared for him!

Still holding her hand in both his, he turned to Piers.

"This is my friend," he said. "You must give him an English welcome. He is one of 'ours,' Faustine."

She drew her hands from Victor, and turned to Piers. She looked straight into his face, her eyes full of dauntless inquiry. She was accustomed to all classes of men. She read him for a moment with scrutiny; then she obeyed Victor, and held out her hand. Piers took it, and stood a moment, returning her gaze, with the flush deepening on his cheek, and his eyes, dark as her own, meeting hers with an expression half-wonder,

half-unconscious admiration, as she stood before him, scanning his face. He did not take in anything of her character, as she did of his.

It could only have lasted a second, that silent greeting, but it always seemed to Piers to have been a long time. He said nothing—nothing occurred to him to say; but Victor, who had looked on, amused and laughing, exclaimed at last—

“Well, Faustine, have you made up your mind about him? Will he do?”

“One of ‘ours’?” she answered; “one of yours or mine?”

She drew her hand from Piers, but looked still inquiringly up into his face.

“One of *the Cause*,” he answered, with a smile, a deeper hue than ever on his cheek, and a sensation—somewhere, that the Cause was indeed a very pleasant one, if—this was its ‘Queen!’

“Yours or mine, *petite méchante!*” said Victor. “Where do we divide? I believe you are the chief element in the war the house threatens to wage against itself, Faustine?”

She looked at him for a moment with bitter scorn.

“I expect to see *you* soon,” she said, “with a ‘*de*’ before your name again, or perhaps a vicomte

of the Empire! I do not believe you know your own colours when you see them, Victor."

"I know 'red' when I see it, and I hate it with truth," he answered. "But, bah! Faustine, a truce to politics; give my friend a kindlier greeting than an instant attack on his views and mine. I tell you, he is of ours."

"What!" she said, with soft sarcasm, turning to Piers again—"what can an English aristocrat, a *milord de la grande Bretagne*, with his great position and his gold, do in the cause of the poor French artisan? Why does he take part in the interests of the children of toil?"

"I am not a *milord*, in the first place," said Piers. "My position is just what I quarrel with. My fortune, such as it is, I lay at the feet of the Cause."

"As Victor has taught it you," she said, turning away with disdain. "Sit down, will you not, both of you. I must tell grandfather that you have come."

"Stay; tell me first, Faustine," said Victor, stopping her, "a little about him. How is he? and how do affairs go, as they regard him?"

"*Pauvre cher vieillard!*" she answered, "he is weak enough; and he sighs because the world goes too fast for him, and people are not satisfied

to stay by the notions he taught them years ago. His disciples are many, Victor—growing daily more; but they outstrip their master by many a strong, hopeful stride.”

“Hopeful? Ah!” said Victor, shaking his head.

“Listen, dear friend,” she answered, turning suddenly on him again with sparkling eyes. “He dreamt—the peaceful old man—he dreamt, as we all sometimes dream, of heaven, and thought it was descending upon earth; and now he is vexed, because men have found there is no heaven, and, at all events, it is not coming here, but that by his help, by making earth-like reality of his Utopian dream, they can assist themselves towards doing away with a good deal that makes this earth an unpleasant place for a great many of them. Ah! is not that about the upshot of it all?”

“And the old man begins to feel himself not a master, but a tool.”

“He is growing old,” she said softly. “Others are springing up, vigorous and young, and they will work out his thoughts, not in his way, but in just their own. Your coming will do him good, Victor,” she went on, turning her eyes to him with a gentler light in them. “You and Henri are always at one with him.”

“I have been too long away,” was his reply.
“Tell him I am here, Faustine.”

“Yes, I will bring him in ;” and she rose.

She paused a moment before Piers, who had risen when she did, and she looked up into his face again.

“I cannot understand,” she said, still in her softened voice, “what brings you here. Was it not pleasant in that England of yours, with riches, with youth? Was there not enough of sweetness in the air, of brightness in your life to banish care—enough to stifle the sounds of suffering in your ears—enough to blind your eyes to want and woe? What brought you here?”

He looked straight into her face as she stood before him, her fingers twined together, her head thrown back, as she questioned him with the imperious directness with which she never scrupled to penetrate the reserve of a history or a man; and he answered spontaneously, speaking just the answer his heart gave, expressing it as it came irrepressibly, suddenly, to his lips; he said, “Fate.”

She shrugged her shoulders slightly, and her lip curved as she turned from him and went from the room. She had read him again: she knew it was another, only just another heart, among many hearts, flung at her feet in that

word—yielded, as his gaze answered hers, to her dominion and her power.

So many; and now this other, wearying her, bringing no glow of triumph, no thrill of answering joy; for *her* heart was bitter, her tongue was barbed and dangerous, her soul was dark, because there was no such language in the only eyes that had sweetness in their gaze for her, no such submission in the only voice she loved. Bright and debonnair *he* was, full of kindly feeling for her, and yet utterly beyond her power.

He would not feel on any point as she would have him feel; he would not embrace principles, as others embraced them, at her inspiration and at her word; he would not hate as she hated; he could not love as *she* loved.

How she loved! How the eyes drooped, that had flashed so angrily, as she stood now without the door, and paused a moment to realise that she had seen him again. How low and tender was the rich voice, breaking in a quivering moan from her, as she struggled with herself. He had come back just the same, ready to spar with playful brightness, ready to contend with her as warmly as ever, his high-strung idealistic doctrines measuring themselves against hers that were so passionate, so resentful, and so heedless of results.

The two sat, when she had left them, in the little *salon*, Victor glancing laughingly round, recognising familiar objects, and detecting new ones.

It was a pretty room, radiant with flowers, vases of creamy roses decorating every table, and filling the window-stands. It had been furnished for Faustine by her grandfather, when she announced her proposed return to him, and was decorated with the old Frenchman's notions of youthful taste. It was panelled with soft colour, gilded like a bonbon-box, and surrounded with pretty ormolu chandeliers pendant from the wall. A fanciful little bower, for his dark-eyed queen, old Auber had prepared as she came back to him—a very different apartment from the old workshop at Le Grand St. Marteau in the Rue St. Clive.

But Dax's position was different. Those delicate intricate discoveries of his had raised him to a pinnacle among watchmakers, to a post of power, wealth, and authority in the Parisian *fabriques*. He had made much money during the last fifteen years, as well as dreamt many dreams; and his own surroundings and Faustine's were much altered accordingly.

He still had his workroom and table of curious tools, over which he poured continually; but

his "*Fabrique*," where the tiny beautiful watches, that went far and near for exhibition, were made, was a large concern, and occupied many ingenious hands.

There was much less external difference now between Faustine and Victor—the handsome and accomplished heiress of the house of Dax and Ladeau and the young student, possible journalist, possible *officier d'artillerie*, possible hero of social and political change—than there had been, at the Grand St. Marteau, between the black-eyed child in the humble workshop and the son of Marie Campbell and the *capitaine* Alphonse de Lescar. Money had done for her, by this time, what gentle birth had always done for him.

Madame de Lescar had in old days regretted the fiery political tendencies of her husband, that led to his going, with his yellow-haired boy, evening after evening, to talk seditious politics with the knot of clever thinkers in the Rue St. Clive; and she had felt truly that the associates he found there neither befitted her principles nor his position and birth. Now she could not, at all events, have made the last protestation. Victor frequented the Place St. Etienne to visit his old friends in company with men of birth as gentle, and position and wealth far beyond

his own—men all of advanced opinion—men sometimes of interesting and original, but always of restless and unsatisfactory minds.

Dax and Faustine received, as of old, every evening; but their receptions contrasted curiously, in everything but political principles, with those of Le Grand St. Marteau, fifteen years ago.

“Is she not a red-hot little revolutionist?” said Victor, while Faustine was still away.

“She is very—she has very—her eyes are very black,” was what Piers finally made up his mind to say.

“Yes—two fires of *l'inferno*, I tell her, when she works herself up; but they are very fine ones, there's no denying. Oh, she is considered a regular beauty, is Faustine.”

“Yes, she is—beautiful!” said Piersempathically.

“Yes, I suppose there is no doubt about it, taking her eyes and face and hair altogether; there is not a fault to be found with her; and there is something poetical in the grand heroic style about her, too. But she is not my taste in beauty, either. I should not like all women to suggest volcanic fires.”

“She is splendid, I think!” said Piers. “I do not quite take her in, though: I cannot make out what she is driving at exactly.”

“Worrying me, you will find pretty generally, is the object of her little remarks,” said Victor. “Faustine and I have kept up a sparring match this many a year on all matters of principle, political and otherwise. And when I am here, whatever is going on, you will see, if you just watch to-night for instance, when all the fellows come (for I have no doubt there will be the usual crew), whatever she says, all her little barbed arrows will be let fly straight at me. Still we are capital friends : we have never had a single quarrel, and I have known her all her life. But somehow about three years ago we got into a chronic state of spar, and so we go on at it. Ah, here she comes !”

And he rose as Faustine, with old Dax leaning on her arm, entered through the curtain hanging over the little door.

CHAPTER III.

“What is noble? ’Tis the finer
Portion of our mind and heart,
Linked to something still diviner
Than mere language can impart,
Ever prompting, ever seeing
Some improvement yet to plan,
To uplift our fellow-being,
And, like man, to feel for man!”

CHARLES SWAIN.

PIERS rose also, and stood bending his head before the frail white-haired man, with a deeper sense of reverence than he had ever before experienced. The aged Founder of their Cause—the creator of that ideal they had offered their lives to pursue—he stood silent and aside, as Victor touched the worn hand with his lips, and looked with infinite tenderness into the gentle dreamy face, so old and so lined now with thought and care.

“Mon père, mon père!” he murmured.

“My son,” said the old man, “my dear son!”

And he put one thin hand (the other still leaning on Faustine’s arm) on Victor’s shoulder, and

gazed into the younger man's face for a long moment, his deep-sunk eyes full of eagerness, full of affection and pride.

"Fils de mon esprit," he said again; and then Victor drew the hand within his arm.

"Let me, Faustine, let me lead him to his chair. Sit down, my father, be seated, and let me present to you my friend; a friend good and true to me as a brother, and a friend who will be leal to the Cause in its highest form."

"Ah!" said Dax, and he bowed with courtesy to Piers, who came forward, his face coloured with deep feeling.

The scene touched him strangely: the frail venerable form; the old eager eyes so wistful, so dreamy, and so tired; the beautiful creature on whose young strength he leant, dark as a Hagar, full of wild passionate spirit as is our thought of that Eastern slave, the mother of Ishmael, the ideal of everything dauntless and free.

She stood so straight, and for her so still and patient; and as the old man paused, her eyes rested with such kindling softness in their dark depths on his fragile face, and then turned on the other face, bright, handsome, and winning as a young Apollo, that bent so gently by her

side. To both, the old man was so strong a centre of tenderness and solicitude. It was only over him, and in discussing all that regarded him, that Faustine and Victor ceased their constant sparring, and their hearts seemed to touch with a really fraternal sympathy and love.

The three were a curious picture, touching by the keen intensity of their own feeling. Feeling spoken all undisguised with the eagerness of their impulsive nation, in their mobile faces and expressive eyes.

“My best friend,” said Victor again.

And Piers, bending with grave reverence towards the old man, obeyed his English impulse, and held out his hand.

“Very glad, monsieur,” said Auber, “to make your acquaintance. *Ce cher* Victor has often written to us of you.”

“I am honoured by yours,” was Piers’s answer. “I owe to you, monsieur,” he continued, expressing himself slowly in his difficult French—“I owe to you, the deepest and brightest thoughts that have ever entered my life.”

“Ah! it is fair to see the fruits returning in the glow of young faces brave and strong, like yours, monsieur—the fruits of the seed cast on many waters, years ago.”

“I hope the fruit will soon be ripened over the lands,” said Piers. “It is springing up everywhere.”

“Everywhere!” exclaimed the old man. “Wonderful to see it in the space of one short life. It is true; and, my children, be not discouraged; do not fear, though the first crop of our harvest does come up evil somewhat, because of the wild soil on which it falls. We can but cast good seed: generations bygone have to answer for the badness of the fermenting soil.”

“Ah! it is so indeed, *mon père*,” said Victor. “Wild weeds will come even from your good sowing; but let them grow; Time will show the eternity of truth, the mortality of falsehood; Time will separate the evil from the good. The fallacies they work out of your words will fall and perish; the truth you speak can never die.”

“Ah, Victor, could they all know, as you know, the evil from the good! But listen here, boy: since that sad St. Pélagie affair, dark things are rising among us, and all my doctrine cannot preach it down. You will hear to-night; you will hear to-night.”

“But need we admit such things among us? Cannot we keep our stream more pure?”

“It has passed from me, Victor; it has passed from me. Here, in my little room, when I am present, they still pay me reverence, they still are silent or echo my words. But, at Brussels, Beckouin sat among the congress; at Geneva, when the *Le Chablis* left the quay, on the fête-day of the Universal, to sail down Lac Lemman, they ran up the Swiss flag without its white cross from the mast-head, proclaiming the red republic in the act. Blanqui and many like him were on board. In London, you know, they resist us. Evil words are falling, Victor, from fiery lips. Felix Pyat’s speech at the grave of poor Clement Hémon has doubtless reached your ears. What it will come to, where it will end, who knows? Be seated, be seated.”

They all sat round him, and he turned to Piers.

“You see, monsieur,” he said, “our first idea, —Hanker’s, Tolberg’s, and mine,—when we talked in the Grand St. Marteau many years ago, and when we went in ’62 to London, was just simply this:—a universal society of proletariats for mutual and self-help, keeping apart from all political quarrel, apart from socialistic doctrines, apart from the schemes of the Communists or Republicans, we wished, inoffensive to all men and in peace, to give our strength to our own

concerns. Brotherly love between us, united strength enabling us, we wished to make the workman's burden lighter, his life more beautiful, his heart more pure. Our minds given to consider his requirements, our world-wide union of force and energy would have ensured compliance to all he required. The workman has responded; the bond of union is linked far and wide; but men have crept in whose impurity of motive may become infectious;—danger threatens. Let tumult and discord arise, and my dream would *die*. The thought of peace, love, mutual assistance, and a bettering of the state of man, would change into a horrid vision of new bloodshed, new revolution, darker tyrannies than any we have known. We want young brave hearts in the cause; we want clear-seeing, temperate minds. May such be found among us! May such arise, champions for the realisation of my ideal!"

"As one such, I venture to offer myself. Money may be needed: I offer mine. Strength, youth, and energy I can at all events lay before you," said Piers eagerly, feeling those dark eyes upon him give fire and energy to his words. He caught a curl of disdain, however, again on the full red lip as he glanced towards her, and wondered within himself that she seemed displeased.

At that moment the little house-bell tinkled loudly, and Faustine rose.

“Ah! here come some of the ‘confrères,’” said Dax, as she passed behind the curtained archway. “Who shall we have to-night?”

He was answered by the opening door and by the appearance of Henri Tolberg, and close behind him another, and another; a whole group of dark-featured men entering with salutations to Auber, and eager glances cast round the room for Faustine.

Henri came forward, and Victor’s hand was clasped warmly in his. Henri came from far. He lived right across Paris in the Route d’Ivry, close to the Gobelins, where he was now a master of his beautiful art.

Dreamy, excitable, with feverish, restless glance as ever, Henri Tolberg still looked refined and intellectual, a high type of the skilful artisan. He still looked melancholy and life-worn, and even more than ever the fire of fanaticism burnt in his dark eyes. He was a Gobelins master-teacher of high standing, and he dabbled in literature, wrote in journals, spoke at noisy cafés as a member of many queer societies, but was, like Auber, a peace man and an advocate for the workmen resting solely upon themselves.

Victor turned to Piers again, and introduced Henri as the friend of whom he had often spoken ; and Piers, looking into the delicate face, wondered, as he held out his hand to the Gobelins workman, over the refinement and the intellect it expressed. A type of a class was Henri Tolberg, not rare among the men whose busy brains and subtle fingers beautify our modern homes ; he might have sat with grace in any of the splendid rooms where his tapestries hung. Victor was very fond of him, and meant Piers to be the same ; so he left them to talk together as he strolled through the room, and picked out his old acquaintances from the gathering crowd.

Faustine came back presently, and was enthusiastically received. Then a servant came in, and covered the centre table with café, with glasses of bonbons, with vin ordinaire, and fruit ; and the guests continued to arrive.

CHAPTER IV.

“But love, first learned in a woman’s eyes,
Lives not alone immured within the brain,
But, with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a *double* power.”

Love’s Labour’s Lost.

“Ce n’est pas un conseil, c’est un Etat.”—BARILLON.

THEY were a curious assemblage, these adorers of Faustine—men who came from every corner of Paris—followers of every kind of profession, devotees to every form of art.

There was first a thick sprinkling of the “artists du Louvre,” pale-faced youths with delicate moustache, long silky curls, and much general poetic *abandon* of costume. They were not, as a rule, loud talkers, this group. They lounged on the sofas; they passed their fingers continually through their hair; they looked often for inspiration towards the ceiling; they sipped coffee and crunched Faustine’s bonbons between their

white teeth, and later, with her permission, they lit their paper cigars.

Then the students from the "Quartier Latin" came out strong,—strong in number, strong in costume! hair thick and short cut, incipient imperial and moustache, round jackets and tight pantaloons of a checked pattern, vast and astonishing. Quick-brained, noisy-tongued young fellows these, latent volcanoes, whose smouldering fires Faustine fanned with assiduous energy and zeal.

There were older men—journalists; some smart and carefully costumed, ringed, scented, and adorned; some of the Bohemian school, of the "hyacinthian locks, wildly floating," of uncombed and unwashed appearance, with a superabundance of hair, and a minimum of shirt-collar, if any at all.

One big portly man, with bullet head, covered with short ringlets, was observable from his size, and from his heavy laugh, heard constantly above the rest; and another, tall, dark, and handsome, was remarkable from his striking appearance, his white hands, and the diamond ring that glittered on the middle finger.

A curious, noisy, diversified, loud-talking assemblage. They clustered about Dax's chair;

they lounged over the centre table ; they stood in humble deference around Faustine's. They lit their cigarettes ; they sipped coffee ; they crunched bonbons ; and they altogether made as curious a medley as it had ever been Piers's fate to see.

Standing talking to Henri for some time, he exchanged with him the sentiments, peaceable, idealistic, and humane, of the old "Universalist." Then—listening, as they ceased their talk, he heard many contending and very different opinions vociferated round him on every side.

The large fat man stood near him, laying down the law to an attentive circle. He struck a fat forefinger on the palm of his left hand, as Piers turned to listen to him, and with solemn emphasis enunciated the sentiment, "Society must be wound up !"

"Ah ! just so." The answer came from behind a trio of cigarettes, and from the circle of eager faces.

"Yes, wound up !" he continued ; "forced to give in its accounts, swept of its three direst enemies—property, the family, and the crown."

"And forced by whom ?" said Victor coolly ; for he had observed the coterie to which Piers had attached himself, and he approached, determined to draw out the opinions of Jean Bouchet,

and let his friend hear this extreme Communistic topic vigorously aired.

“Forced by the government of a communal assembly!” exclaimed Jean Bouchet, prophet of this school. “An assembly elected by the free votes of a universal electoral power; that is, the votes of the whole nation, women as well as men, poor as well as rich,—an assembly of chosen representatives, constituting a commune; in other words, the State. Their first office shall be to wind up society and to reconstitute it.”

“Reconstitute it through the *enforced* acceptance of their own laws? I beg your pardon, M. Bouchet, I have been absent from France, as you know, two years: things have been advancing since I was last here. Will you enlighten me a little, on the development that it is evident has taken place in the views of many Universalists since my departure?”

“With pleasure, *mon ami*. The march of enlightenment is indeed rapid; the Empire shakes to its foundation; the men of free opinion, of advanced views, increase round us every day. The crisis approaches: society, I say, will be wound up.”

“By the agency of this new State?”

“By its agency, certainly. It will drag down

the rich to the level of his fellow-creature ; it will abolish accumulated capital ; it will prohibit territorial possession ; it will extinguish the old worn-out superstition that is ever prone to reproduce the vampires of monarchy and the delusions of religion ; and, most important of all, it will exterminate these social institutions that result in selfish and individual concentration of a man's interests and energies on his household, practically on himself. Thus we shall escape all laws of inheritance, all absorption of property for individual interests, and cause a gravitation of every valuable element in the community towards the central interests of the State."

"Abolish, exterminate, prohibit, extinguish, annihilate !" said Victor. "These seem to me, M. Bouchet, strange words to be descriptive of the powers of a State professing itself on the side of national freedom.

"Only powers, my dear sir," said Bouchet softly, "with which, understand me, the nation of its own free will will endow an elected Assembly, who stand merely in the position of national agents appointed for the accomplishment of certain political and social reforms."

"You presuppose a national uniformity of opinion on these important points. Suppose for

a moment the opposite: a certain amount of variety is likely to spring up in the light in which men will view this, as they have done all other political creeds. *Et puis ?*”

“*Et puis, que voulez-vous ?* The State is appointed by the nation to reconstruct its social and political constitution; the nations, or *the world* as it will be, agree, in the vast fraternity of one human family, to regard themselves as children in obedience to the same parent, namely, the State Communal, who, by their own free will, they have appointed to this position for the accomplishment of these reforms, which, by the same free will and enlightened choice, the nations of the world have agreed to desire. One vast brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity, united by human affections, by mutual and equal interests, stretches before the imagination grandly sublime in the picture I describe. Above them floats their elected parent, the State Communal, to whom the whole human family is bound by equal and strong ties of tenderness and regard; in whose eyes no man is greater or less than his brother, no man is richer than all other men, no man more worthy esteem or regard. All the State will be called upon to require of its children, will be *unanimous* compliance—compliance spring-

ing from the unanimous agreement of views. That will be the general spectacle, the picture at large."

"But suppose opposition," urged Victor; "suppose the Commune elected and endowed with its power, instructed in its mission of annihilating, abolishing, extinguishing, exterminating, and other duties; suppose some small fragment of the nations failed to be unanimous, and protested that they individually, their families and their territorial proprietorship, should not be exterminated, abolished, or extinguished;—what then? The harmony of the Commune would be destroyed."

"And its destroyer an enemy," said Bouchet sternly—"a rebellious child of the State, a disturber of national harmony; and, as such, must feel the weight of the parental arm. The judicious exercise of the State's entrusted authority would deal with such. National and international unanimity of opinion and union of will would be our strength, and is now the foundation on which we build. An opponent of this vast and beautiful human harmony we should be obliged to force into acceptance of the universal will."

"Or exterminate, abolish, prohibit, and annihilate *him*?" said Victor, disregarding the angry

eyes that glittered on him, and the groan of angry discordant voices that greeted the sarcasm of his words.

“*Mon ami*,” said Bouchet, shrugging his shoulders, “the Commune, that triumphal car of human reason and free will, is a mighty irresistible energy, that comes rolling steadily and majestically on. *On* she must come, rolling on : is it her fault if men rashly, in vain opposition, fling themselves beneath her great chariot-wheels ?”

“Roll on ! I suppose,” said Victor, “even if the fair form of national Liberty herself, by some strange mistake, just in the general work of annihilation, be found, among many other old institutions, lying crushed beneath her wheels. I am not a Communist, you know, Bouchet ; you will pardon my anxiety for the safety, under your ideal Commune, of this best-beloved Goddess of my land.”

“Fear not,” said Bouchet, loftily ; “we *reverence* liberty as you do.”

“Reverence !” interrupted Victor. “I thought that reverence was one of the old words to be abolished from the dictionary of the great international tongue.”

“Abolished in many old accepted meanings, you are right ; maintained to express our regard

simply, for—Liberty, the State we elect to represent her, and the law she suggests. Liberty is in our eyes, like all other theories of existence, a science; she must be studied as such, if her intricate requirements are to be understood. I have sketched them to you shortly. The *Mot d'Ordre*, the *Drapeau*, the *Lanterne*, and the works of Monsieur Louis Noir enlarge on what I have described."

And with this, Bouchet, puffing out his fat cheeks, and running his fingers through his much anointed hair, turned with some dignity towards the table where the coffee and bonbons stood.

The pause thus ensuing in the conversation gave opportunity for the circle of cigarette-smokers, who had listened with silent deference to his words, to let loose their speech, and to mingle their assenting echoes in a noisy jargon.

Victor and Piers moved away. There was a grave anxious expression, at once sad and angry, on Victor's usually sunny face.

"Ah!" he exclaimed to Piers as they stood a moment together, "the death-knell of liberty certainly sounds in such doctrines as these. What was ever, in the world's history, so ruthlessly tyrannical as that *Assemblée* of the first Revolution? What could imagination conceive

more despotic, more annihilating to a national character than a state authority that organized and appointed in such a way as that the private concerns of men ? ”

“ These are certainly not the views with which I conceived of the ideal of our Universal,” said Piers.

“ No ! ” cried Victor, with a ring of bitter pain in his voice. “ They call themselves followers of Mazzini. *Dieu !* if they could only listen to his words. He has analysed all these ideas thoroughly. He has shown Fourier and Babœuf in their true light ; and these men profess a love of him, and preach the doctrines he abhors. Bah ! Let us listen here : we will have a word or two from Père Dax, that will doubtless expunge that bad-tasting language from our minds. Ah ! political economists, most of these men here : more in the right vein.”

A man was speaking as they paused at this group,—a solid, thoughtful-looking man, whose face had neither the excitability nor the bitter cynicism that distinguished most of his neighbours. He spoke like Friedrich Hanker, with a German accent, and spoke slowly and heavily, but with powerful emphasis and with effect. Hanker himself sat near him, and put a word

in now and then ; and Dax listened, his thin hands folded on his knees, his eyes, kindling and full of attention, raised to the speaker's face, his lip quivering sometimes with agitation, as he watched his turn to reply.

“ A State,” the German was saying, “ should be an assemblage endowed with the power, and specially appointed with the object, of providing for the greatest possible numbers the greatest possible good. A State should provide free to the nation the intellectual and physical requirements of life—free education, free grants for the establishment of co-operative associations in trade, national workshops. A State should establish laws for the regulation of the hours of labour ; they should regulate the graduated taxation for supply of government funds ; they should buy up the land, and all the national requirements for industry and human support, and they should distribute them free, or sell them at fair prices, till the necessity of the whole community be supplied. A State should thus be empowered to abolish penury, want, ignorance, and all those unequal conditions in the fate of man ; and the State, when appointed and elected to its offices, should stand responsible that these political and social evils should no more exist.”

“Why not, while you are about it,” said Dax, “make the State responsible for sickness, death, accident, and moral depravity as well, Lutzar? Men are visited by all these, and they militate continually against the public good. So powerful and beneficent a government as you propose should exterminate also these evils of the race.”

Lutzar shrugged his shoulders.

“There is a limit to all things, *mon ami*,” he said.

“Yes; and my limit is narrower than yours,” continued Dax. “Your theories run directly counter to the old doctrines of the Universal. We do not want to raise up a State to regenerate us; we want to regenerate ourselves. I do not think a State that held out competent comfort, free education—all you propose—would be an elevating power among men. I do not want to see reforms done *for* the people: I want to see them enlightened to desire, and assisted to procure, by efforts, by self-denial, by industry, comfort and education for themselves. I do not want to see the working-man treated as a child or an animal, fed, trained, satisfied, amused at the expense of other agencies, as an unconscious, unthinking machine. I want to see the working class unite to maintain their own independence,

their own power to support and educate themselves. Too much is done by the State already, Lutzar: you propose still more and more. The result, I tell you, would be the destruction of self-respect among the people, and moral enervation throughout all that vast class of the community whom we would wish to regard with interest and esteem. The last doctrine I would teach a workman is to lean on a State, and not on his own brain and hands,—to look to the intervention of State money to keep his children from want, to State charity to educate them, to State organization to appoint their exact position and the circumstances under which they exist. All bad, all enervating,—all results of the same system that provides for a nation to become paupers if—they will.”

Auber was fairly roused now; and much more on this knotty point of State-intervention, and the limits of a State’s responsibilities, passed between Lutzar, Hanker, and him.

CHAPTER V.

“Cursed be the man who thinks it brave
And great, his country to enslave,
Who of his nation longs to be the first,
Though, haply, at the rate of being the worst!”

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

ALL this time, Piers Ashton's eyes had been wandering to another group, and he could see, all the while Bouchet, Auber, and others were speaking, and he and Victor standing near, that, from this third group, glances of two dark eyes were constantly turned upon them, as if claiming their attention, and chafing at their delay. These eyes, full of watchful inquiry, rested often upon himself, thrilling him as he felt them turn to him with an electric influence that drew his thoughts instantly from the most interesting theories of Bouchet or Auber. Quite unconsciously his own gaze turned ever to answer hers, but always just in time to see the dark eyes pass from him, to rest on Victor's slight form and

eager face. The gaze then became full of impatience—full of *something*—it puzzled Piers to understand.

She was always quarrelling with Victor, he remembered ; yet, he wished somehow, with a curious, undefined, inexplicable sense of longing within his heart, that when her eyes turned his way instead of towards Victor, that they would rest with just such an expression on him !

Victor's brow knit again for a moment, much as it had done when he listened to Bouchet, as now, turning from Père Auber, and the group round his chair, he approached the little alcove, where, on a low settee, sat Faustine, surrounded by her adorers, her disciples, and her brother-teachers of her own school.

She looked very beautiful as she leaned back, one arm lying easily on the cushion by her side, the other raised often when she spoke, to enforce with energetic emphasis her words. Her head, with its plaits of black hair coiled round and round it, was thrown proudly back. She looked from one to the other of the excited faces that bent eagerly towards her ; her eyes glistened with mingled expression, and a touch of scorn and bitterness curled her crimson lip.

She was very simply dressed; nothing of the “grande dame, en toilette de soir,” about her as she received her friends. Her dark-coloured gown was high nearly to the neck, with sleeves reaching to the elbow, a single row of beautiful lace, falling back from the statuesque throat, and over the shapely arms. A rich creamy “rose de Provence” was her only ornament. She looked dark and shadowy; yet brilliant,—with that soft brilliancy with which the flowers gleam, as they nestle in their dark-green foliage, beneath the soft moonlight of an Eastern night.

The tall, striking-looking man, who wore the diamond ring, sat near her, lounging carelessly, leaning one arm on the back of his chair, as he smoothed continually his black beard and moustache. His eyes rested upon Faustine often with undisguised admiration, and sometimes with no little amusement.

She was excited and fervent in her political demonstrations; and it amused him, for he was cool and cynical in his. It was part of his profession indeed to fire excitement in other brains: he rarely committed the error of exciting himself. Raoul Regnau’s pen lighted many a flame, and fanned many a smoking heart to furnace-heat. Raoul Regnau’s eye could assume and inspire

enthusiasm of which his own callous heart had no power of conception, and his tongue, speaking wild seditious words, could create heroes in devotion to the cause which he professed, though, in the whole range of his *own* tyrannical and sanguinary character, there was not a single trait of anything more heroic than vain self-glorification, a passion for power and notoriety, love of every kind of indulgence, and with this a reckless disregard of consequences to the life of any other man.

He professed to worship an ideal Republic, a free and perfect Commune. In reality he worshipped—Raoul Regnau; and no one, or nothing, else than him. He admired Faustine, and imagined he loved her. He served her as a disciple of her ideals, really because—in serving her, he advanced himself; in obeying her, he gained power over her adherents; in holding his place as first in the rank of her adorers, he acquired sway, by subtle dexterity, over every other man who surrounded her with him.

He dreamt, too—for all were dreamers there, all dreamt of a strange millennium, when new theories, new social conditions, new forms of government, would perfect the state of man,—but Raoul Regnau's dream had a centre, the only centre his

heart ever knew—himself. He thought nothing of the sufferings of the masses, of whom he wrote so passionately; nothing of the well-being of the poor, of whose cause his tongue could throw off so glibly such inspiring words. He thought only of a millennium for Raoul Regnau, in which,—as the upshot of great subversions,—*he* appeared, somehow, always uppermost, standing (perhaps under a different name) in a certain pleasant position, where the ruler of the French people stood just then; not a king, not an emperor (for would not France be Republic, and the State a Commune?), but something whose new name would imply a power over life and death, a power over property and freedom, a power such as the strictest despot who ever filled a royal or imperial throne had never striven to assume, a power, of which there has been, as yet, only one shadow in these latter days upon earth—in the Assembly, who made the death of the Girondins an undying and shameful memory for republican France.

Raoul Regnau held himself to be the only man destined, worthy or capable, to hold this power; and, in his dream of reform and revolution, the new government had always this central point. One woman he thought he knew worthy to share

it with him ; and, in the vision of new Paris, he saw her enthroned by his side.

Why not? Paris was hopefully blind, easily excited, easily deceived ! “*Tout vient à ceux qui savent attendre.*” Raoul Regnau waited ; and, meanwhile, with tongue and pen and money he winged surely his shafts, and sent them far and wide.

Ah, that that volatile nation had some touchstone, by which to test the truth—and the lie !

Another figure prominent in the group around Faustine was a graceful, eager-eyed man, with pointed imperial and moustache, who stood leaning with one knee on his chair, looking with quick glances from Regnau to her.

Another was a young officer in the rich uniform of the Imperial Guard. He took no part in the discussion, but stood back on the fringe of the circle, satisfied to listen and gaze in silence at Faustine. Truly her adorers and disciples formed a group of strangely diversified and contrasting characters.

Victor whispered to Piers, as they paused near, “Look at Henri Rochecarre,” he said, pointing to the young man who leaned upon the chair. “He is a fine fellow in a scatterbrain sort of way ; genuine, though, to the core ; unsound, unsafe,

but true to his profession. He is a vicomte of a very old family in the Landes ; but he has given himself up to revolutionary politics, to journalism and speech-making, and has flung his title to the winds. He has great talent : I wish he had a pound or two of ballast in his brain. And there is Eugène de Valéry," he continued, indicating the young officer. "Poor boy ! he has no right to be here : that uniform has no place among us. I suppose the attractions are those black orbs of Faustine. Little mischief-maker ! A strange sort of fellow that," he added, signing towards the white hand raised, at that moment, with its flashing ring : "I do not make him out. Let us join in and listen. Ah, Henri, *mon cher !*"

This was to Henri Tolberg, who stood near them, and who turned as Victor laid his hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"Hot revolutionary politics ?" said Victor inquiringly to him.

Henri scarcely answered ; he only shook his head.

"Ah, Henri !" said Victor, sadly ; and then he nodded with a smile to Faustine.

"Here is our prodigal !" cried Henri Rochecarre, laughing. "Victor, *mon ami*, I thought you had deserted us entirely. I expected to hear

you were sitting for a heavy British constituency as an English M.P.”

“Not international enough yet in this world for that, Rochecarre; besides, my fatherland claims my first love still.”

“But you are a great man. What do you call yourself in that barbaric tongue? A ‘R-r-ranglair’?” continued Rochecarre.

“A ‘seignor R-ranglair de Cambreedge,’” exclaimed Raoul, “it is no small thing to be. We look to you, Lescar, to do grand things among us. You will be our greatest hero, *mon cher*,” he added, in a mellow, flattering tone.

“Not while Raoul Regnau is one of us,” responded Victor, with a touch of irony in his voice.

“No, no, I am no ‘seignor R-ranglair;’ no great educational hero, I!” said Raoul. “But we shall see: in that day, when the great crisis comes, every man will have his chance, my friends; every man the occasion to evince what power is his.”

Faustine’s eyes were raised to Victor softly, for a moment, as she answered Raoul’s remark.

“And in that day the good and great among men will become dominant, and heroes stand in their own true place.”

“All will be heroes,” said Raoul, pompously.

“The thrill of glorious Liberty will fill every heart with heroic power; a nation of heroes of freedom will spring where we now see a nation of slaves.”

“It goes so slowly,” exclaimed Faustine, passionately. “We meet, we discuss, we scheme, we see visions of our success; but action is nowhere. Every one of you,” she continued, flashing her eyes upon them with angry scorn, “can talk, and write, and speechify; not one of you can *do*.”

“The time is not ripe,” replied Regnau. “The men are ready; we await but the hour; and it goes fast, not slow. The Empire is tottering; our emissaries have penetrated the secrets of its strongest force, our agents are at work everywhere; the army is disaffected, the people are irritated and inflammable; the seed that fell in each precious drop of the martyred blood of Orsini has sunk into a fertile soil, and the harvest has sprung up. Again and again, as it ripens, we pluck it, and recast it again—each year over wider fields, each year reaching further, each sowing piercing more deep. The time is at hand; be patient but a little still: it is at hand.”

“An organized revolution?” asked Victor.

“The rising of an army, in which I see you a leader, M. Lescar—the army of Liberty, the champions of a republic, the children of the

Commune ; the ' Universal ' born at last into real and vigorous life : the day draws near."

"The Emperor *must* have war at home or abroad before long ; no doubt of that," put in Henri Rochecarre. "We will help him quietly by fanning the home-flames : we will leave him to fight his foreign battles for himself."

"Yes, war is the first step," exclaimed Regnau, "and war is not far distant, as you say, Rochecarre."

"God forbid !" was Victor's ejaculation, which drew the circle of angry eyes to his face.

"What—*Dieu défend ?*" cried Raoul Regnau—"war that will draw off the troops from Paris, waste the military strength of the Empire, open the way for us to go safely on ! You understand little the schemes of your confrères, *mon cher* Lescar."

"I believe I do," was Victor's answer. "I understand the Universal, M. Regnau : the Commune is a new birth since I was last in France."

"Then, Monsieur segnor R-ranglair, you have much to learn," retorted Raoul. "When you are a little longer in the ranks of your cause again, you will understand that war is the demand of the nation, and a *necessity* for us."

'And our cause was peace,' cried Victor bitterly.

“Its end—yes,” said Raoul; “but its means inevitably must be war. Read the advanced journals, monsieur, such, for instance, as I have the honour, as all here know,—though not in my own name,—to edit, and the programme proposed and foreseen by all of us will become clearer to your mind,—if,” he added, sarcastically, “I may venture to suggest information from a humble journal de Paris to a segnor R-ranglair de Cambreedge.”

Evidently, from the ill-concealed bitterness of his tone, there was something in the bright quick spirit and eager countenance of Victor Lescar that excited jealous rancour in the questionable sublimity of Raoul Regnau’s soul.

Victor moved away a little, but paused and turned to Faustine a moment, disregarding all answer to Regnau’s last remark; for old experience had told him that, without much fortitude of forbearance, these political and so-called world-wide discussions were very prone to narrow into personal channels, and to ripen into unpleasant results. He had no wish to cross swords or exchange a pistol-shot with M. Raoul Regnau for the honour of the “Cambreedge R-ranglair.”

“Faustine,” he said brightly, “do you not

grace your receptions in these days with your songs; or have the times grown too severe and serious?"

"No; we often have songs," she answered. "We have several musicians among us. *You* sing, Victor: will you?" she added, with a softening voice. "It is long since we have heard you?"

He obeyed her, and went to the little piano: it was agreeable to his own impulse to do so as well. Raoul Regnau, with his conceited patronage and his mellow tones of sarcastic flattery, had irritated him more almost than he could bear, and he fled to music as a panacea—to song to insure silence from retorting speech.

His spirit was jarred, vexed, and rendered gloomy and anxious by nearly all he had heard to-night. High-strung idealistic philanthropy had fled on mournful wings from among them: riot, revolution, bloodshed, everything most fatal to that peace and human well-being of which he had dreamt, seemed to breathe in a poisoned and fiery atmosphere round him on every side.

He struck the notes, and swept his fingers vigorously over them, in the strong effort to recall harmony to his spirit, and to invoke peace and purity of inner vision in his disturbed and darkened soul. He played he scarcely knew

what, his eyes wandering sadly over the excited scene. He played only, and sang nothing : so they did not cease their noisy talk ; but from every group there reached him these jarring voices ; round every speaker he could see those circles of dark heated faces, these thirsty eager eyes.

Still he played on. And Piers lingered by the knot round the sofa, and saw (though Victor never observed it) that as he played, now dreamily and soft, now with passionate vigour, that Faustine's head drooped till it rested on her hand with a gesture of weariness, that her eyes sank, and were raised again to wander many times beyond the faces around her to the corner where the player sat, and that her voice ceased utterly to mingle in the noisy tumult about her, and her ear to hear anything save the sweet harmonies that floated to her restless spirit, and reached her through and above them all.

She rose at length, swept past Piers as he stood by Henri Tolberg, pushed her way through the circle of her disciples, and, all regardless of Raoul's glance of jealous anger, she moved to Victor's side.

He looked up and smiled to her, as she came near to him, and leant her arm on the piano.

She raised her hand to her forehead, and swept back her dark hair.

“You have not lost the Orpheus touch yet, Victor,” she said, softly. “You still play to exorcise, or to inspire.”

“Would I could exorcise; would I could inspire!” he murmured as he played on. “We need both powers sadly here.”

“Bah!” she exclaimed, with an angry shadow on her softened face, “you are dreaming yet, Victor. We must be practical and real in our schemes; we must float on the tide as it *is*, not as we dream it to be. We must strike the blows of our cause where the force of our blows will tell.”

“*Chère*,” he said, taking his fingers from the keys, and looking earnestly up at her, “blows *never* were our scheme. I am a soldier by my birth, Faustine, I am no chicken-heart, or no poltroon; but the strength of my blows and the force of my arm are for the enemies, not the children, of France.”

“Bah!” she exclaimed again. “Let me tell you of it all, but not now; they are coming round us. But, later, let me tell you, Victor. You do not know all that we have done since you left us. You do not know what a career opens, what a field there is, for such as you. I say you do not

know your colours when you see them ; you do not recognise your own interests when they are visible and near. I must tell you later. Ah ! Monsieur Regnau, you draw near : you too, then, appreciate such music as this ? ”

“ I appreciate above all,” he answered courteously, “ the strains of a voice that has been still too long. It is many evenings since you have favoured us, you, our goddess and our queen.”

“ I sing little now,” she answered.

“ But sing to-night, Faustine,” interrupted Victor, “ for old friendship’s sake,” he added softly in English, which only Piers, of those now close round them, understood. “ I want my friend to hear—as I have often promised to him he should hear—the voice that used to brighten for both of us our old St. Marteau home. I hope new theories, Faustine, have not extinguished old favourite songs.”

Raoul Regnau’s eyes turned with an angry glare as Victor bent, with a winning but quite familiar and brotherly courtesy, towards Faustine, as he murmured in a low tone these words in a tongue not understood by Raoul. And the black eyes of the revolutionist grew angrier still, as Faustine, with a strange unusual gleam of tenderness in hers, sat down at Victor’s request, and awoke the

piano, once more, with a touch so soft and melodious that even old Dax ceased his discussion, and looked up with a bright smile of pleasure to listen.

In one moment every voice was hushed ; for the notes of hers arose—a deep rich beautiful contralto. She sang a few bars of an old Provencial song, with a passion and tenderness that thrilled every wild heart among them, and made Piers Ashton's eye glisten and his cheek crimson again.

Just a few bars, while her eyes sought Victor's, and met in his an answer bright and well pleased as he recognised and smiled his thanks for a familiar song. A moment her glance rested on him, the expression of wistful, longing tenderness searching vainly for something more, something really responsive to her heart's cry, in the answer of his, and then—she ceased, quite suddenly, her sweet soul-stirring song but just began ; she ceased, and threw her head up, and averted her eyes from him ; she took her hands from the keys with an impatient gesture, a cloud of angry, bitter disappointment swept over her face ; she tossed her hair back once more from her darkened brow, and she gathered herself together with a strong effort and drove her softened mood away.

“ Ah ! ”—a long chorus of disappointment broke from every voice.

“ Nonsense ! ” she responded, impatiently ; “ there are better subjects for songs. Listen ! Bah ! I will inspire you, one and all, my friends. Listen ! echo and reply. The windows are closed, are they not, and fast ; the doors are shut ? Listen ! here is something stirring and true.”

And she struck the notes again with angry vigour ; she pitched again her voice, this time loud, enthusiastic, powerful, filling the room, and a wild chorus of delight greeted her as she rang out the stormy notes of the “ Marseillaise.”

“ I could not have helped it,” she exclaimed, when she had finished, “ if it had cost us all a year in St. Pélagie ! Good night, my friends, good night ! ”

She rose as she finished, and turned to extend her left hand with a gesture of dismissal to Regnau, who stood, with arms folded and with lowering glance, at her side. He took her hand and bent over it, but she drew it carelessly away before it had touched his lips.

“ *Au revoir !* it is late,” she said ; and Dax also rose.

With a few more words their guests,—accepting

their accustomed dismissal,—one by one, or in knots of kindred thinkers, bowed their farewells.

The room was emptied of its curious assemblage, the motley crowd to whom Dax threw it open evening after evening in behalf of the Cause,—that Cause, which seemed chiefly to advance by the efforts of its adherents, on these occasions, to talk much and loud: having done this patriotic duty well and bravely,—they dispersed.

“Stay,” said Faustine, in a low tone, as Victor approached her. “You need not go. My grandfather has not had a word with you. Stay, you—and your friend also,” she added, as Piers drew near. “Stay,” she continued to *him*, letting him take her right hand for a moment in his English way, and detaining him as she watched the others go;—Henri Tolberg, wistful and unwilling; Rochecarre, smiling and full of courteous grace; Regnau, dignified and angrily jealous again as he saw Victor pause.

Bouchet stopped Victor as he passed, and held him, button-holed, for a moment while he said—

“Lescar, I have announced a series of papers by you in *La Cloche* immediately on your return. Will you let me have them? Your own price, you know.”

“On what?” asked Victor.

“On English politics and their prospects from *our* point of view.”

“Ours?” said the other, emphatically.

“Yes, yes; nothing extreme in *La Cloche*: a safe, sound journal; comes out under the editorship of my own name. Do not fear. The true colours figure only in the *Lanterne*, and under Monsieur Regnau’s *nom de plume* and incognito in the *Mot d’Ordre*, and would land all of us, if they were traced, in St. Pélagie for a pretty time. But no one suspects Raoul Regnau, and I shelter my name under the shadow of *La Cloche*. No human being beyond ourselves suspects the journals are printed at the same office, and edited by the same pen. Ha! ha!” laughed the fat man. “If you want to get into harness, now is your hour. Look in on me to-night—No. 2, Rue Calodien, you know—any time before four to-morrow morning, and we shall settle it without delay. Do not disappoint me, Lescar. I have promised the public; and you gave me your promise before you went away.”

“Yes,” said Victor, “I gave my word to serve in the cause many a day ago. The difficulty now is, to see how I *can* serve it. But I will come, Bouchet. I know the Rue Calodien. I may bring

my friend : he is safe as need be, and as true as steel.”

“Oh, yes, bring him : we will drink a little glass together and clench the small affair. Your own terms, remember.—That is it—very well. Then—at twelve to-night we shall see you. Till then—adieu.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ A good that never satisfies the mind ;
A beauty fading like the April flowers ;
A sweet with floods of gall, that run combined ;
An honour that more fickle is than wind ;
A glory at opinion’s frown that lowers ;
A style of greatness—in effects a dream.”

WILLIAM DRUMMOND.

WHEN they were all gone, Faustine returned to her seat behind the piano again, and Piers was drawing near her,—for Victor had sat down by old Dax ; but, Faustine, after striking a few chords absently, called to him.

“ Victor, I want you here.”

He rose and crossed the room to her, and Piers turned and took his place by the old man’s side. His conversation, at any other time, would have bewitched Piers.—The sweet fantastic beauty of his imagination, the largeness and simplicity of his views, his mournful criticisms on the discussions of the evening, his eager confident hopes in a future, when men would see clearly, and all

things be well. But Piers could listen to none of this to-night. His eyes, with that strange new expression in them, wandered constantly to the piano; and his attention became absorbed there as well, as he watched the two, and caught broken sentences of their conversation, reaching him, as in their eagerness and excitement their voices overpowered Dax's gentle tones.

Faustine sat at the piano, Victor leaning upon it and bending towards her.

"Victor," she said, as he came in obedience to her call, and waited to hear what she wished to say to him, "you must *not* quarrel with Raoul Regnau."

"Not if he does not insist on quarrelling with me," he replied.

"Listen!" she continued, impetuously. "Victor, you have been away so long, the aspect of things is much changed since you left us. The old hazy theories like those of my grandfather have no more power. You must resign them, Victor, and turn to action like the others."

"Show me action worthy of a patriot, a Frenchman, and a Christian soldier, Faustine, and I will be the first to act. Fear not; you will not find me behind, when the time for action comes."

“It has come, Victor. You are worthy to lead them, and you only. All else are seeking their own good ; you only care for goodness and greatness for itself. You are the only patriot among us all, Victor ; you are their true-born leader. We have only waited for you : all is ready.”

“To lead what, Faustine ? I am ready : show me the field of action ; I will not lag behind.”

“Friend,” she cried passionately, clasping her hands together, “I have been working for you all these years, while you have been away girding on the armour you have chosen for yourself. I have remained here, calling together your army, preparing your field ; and now, you have come back, and I see it, Victor, I see it,—the armour is upon you ; your power has grown strong ; the vigour of a leader speaks in your voice, and commands men against their will. You have come back to us, *ready*. I see what it has done for you ; the culture they lack with all their quickness here—you have it, Victor. You could rule them ; you have but to appear, you have but to give your power to the true work, and your mind to understand its ways, and you would be chosen without rival as our leader, our president, our general, our king !”

“Dear Faustine,” he said tenderly; “but the field, the army, and the goal—the cross of the crusade, the Cause? I see none of these.”

“They are all ready,” she exclaimed. “The Army, Victor! Many of its captains were here to-night: you are its one fitting general. The field is fair France—our Paris. She is panting, impatient in her chains; the Cause—her liberty, her revenge. Liberty for the children of republicans—for the descendants of the victims of ’48 (my father was one, Victor); revenge for the blood of Félice Orsini, and all martyrs like him who have fallen in the crusade against monarchy, against imperialism, against despotism in every shape and form.”

He shook his head.

“Faustine,” he said, “you forget I am a Universalist.”

“We all are,” she answered impatiently. “Victor, Victor, do not hang back. I have done it all for you—for you, my old friend, my childhood’s friend. Take your part, and study your part with those who can teach you. Henri Tolberg, for instance; he thinks as *you* think in many points, but he shares with me the conviction that you *are* our destined leader. Do not disappoint us, Victor.”

“What would you have me to do?” he said again earnestly; “what would you have me do? I cannot join these fiery agitators. I hate conspiracy; I hate street riot and civil revolt: the whole thing is repugnant to me. I dislike the men who represent it. I see no good to any class of our fellow-creatures to arise from any possible result.”

“Result!” she exclaimed again. “The result would be your career, Victor—a great, a sublime career. You would be leader and commander among the people; you would fill the place for which you alone are worthy. Dear friend, do not disappoint me; do not quarrel with them all. Go to Bouchet to-night; go to the Café Carnier in the Rue Duplas. See how events are hurrying on, Victor; see how true it is that men must join in the general advance. Recollect your plighted word; I heard you first give it here: you are a Universalist—do not forget. He,—the dear revered one there,—is but its far-off dreamer; those men to whom you go to-night are its sinews and its strength. Go to them, Victor; study their spirit; throw yourself into the ranks; take your place as their leader; speak, let yourself be felt among them, *unequalled* as you are, and Raoul, the noisy boaster, will not oppose or quarrel

with you, but will yield the throne of President unresistingly to you."

Even Faustine had not read the depth of Raoul Regnau yet.

"He felt his master in you to-night, Victor," she continued; "but you must make him feel it more; you must make him own it even to silence, and he will do it. When you raised your word, he recognised you—master in the coming day,—and he dropped his savage blood-hound eyes. I hate Raoul Regnau: you must conquer him."

"My dear friend, I will go to Bouchet's to-night, because I promised to go. I will not forget that I am a plighted Universalist; and I will serve the Universal by every effort in my power. But your dream seems vaguer to me than the father's, Faustine; and I do *not* yet see the duties which you insinuate honour calls me to perform. When I see them, fear not, I will be ready. But, Faustine," he added, "do not mistake me. I do not hate the Empire;—I am not prepared to avenge the blood of Félice Orsini, who died as a regicide should die. And should you ever find me fighting with my brother Frenchmen on our French soil, you may say with truth that I am *mad* indeed! I can conceive no more horrible condition of things."

“I doubt if you could fight at all, Victor,” she exclaimed, with a momentary flash of disappointment and scorn.

“Not fight against the enemy of France, Faustine? You have known me long,” was all his reply.

“And I know you well,” she continued, turning to him softened and repentant again. “Dear friend, forgive. Amongst us all, you are noblest—best. But,” and she paused again, and laid her hand suddenly with impulsive eagerness on his, “Victor, I have done it *all* for you; will you desert the Cause? Will you not accept a great career?—will you not take it, and adorn it, and rule in it; if not for its own sake, Victor, will you not do it for—mine?” and she turned her dark face up to his, glowing with excitement, full of witching, entreating power. And he looked down upon her for a long moment, that would have worked in most hearts of their community madness enough to excuse any promise or any deed.

A long moment; then he became very grave. A thought that had often troubled his spirit came to him, and he spoke it then:—

“Faustine,” he said, “you are very, very beautiful! You—should weigh *earnestly* your strong power over men.”

“Victor!” her voice still softened. Had she any power over him, then?

He continued:—

“Old, dear friend, you are rushing on a stormy way; you have lost sight of old goals. Faustine, I can accept no such career as you conceive for me. I serve the pure old doctrines of Auber’s schemes of the ‘Universal.’ I will join no republican revolution, no sanguinary plots, no conspiracy against the Empire. I will go to Bouchet’s to night, as I tell you; but if the Universal have no other work for me than you describe, Faustine, I will enter the army, and join my father in Algiers without delay. And,” he continued, gently taking the hand she had laid so impetuously on his into his own again, “dear sister, dear early friend, turn with me; leave these wild thorny ways; be a woman in gentle tenderness, as you are rich in every womanly beauty, fair with every womanly grace.”

“Dear *brother!*” she answered him, with angry sarcasm wrung from her aching, passionate heart—“dear brother, I have many brothers besides you; and I cannot desert them all to obey you, who are but one. I understand plighted word and honour as they understand it; and many among them have caught the interpretation

from me. I will be true to them, Victor, my brother, even if you are untrue to us all."

"Untrue, Faustine! unworthy of you! unjust!" he murmured in a pained and regretful voice.

"Victor! Victor!" She turned to him again; her hand caught his once more; she looked up to him, her quick mood all changed again, "Victor, forgive!"

He touched his lips to her hand, with a brotherly caress, and smiled in reconciliation.

"A truce to politics!" he said; and then he turned to Auber and Piers.

"You cannot be tired of waiting, I know, with Père Dax to talk to, Piers," he said with a smile. "But it is very late; even Bouchet will be going to bed, and, Père Dax, how bad for you! Shame on us all, Faustine, to keep him from his rest so long."

"I am not tired, my children," said the old man. "My eyes are still vigorous, Victor, vigorous and strong."

"You can see your fairy watch-springs as clearly as ever, no doubt," said Victor. "Ah! I was proud when I found Dax and Ladeau first upon the counters of the best London horlogists, *mon père*—that I was; and they said they had nothing like

them. No one has come up to your discovery on the repeater's spring. But, nevertheless, it is late now, and it is shameful of us to stay so long. Come, Piers! Faustine, listen! I have a pilgrimage to make:—come and make it with me. I want to take Piers to Le Grand St. Marteau, to show him the church and the château, and the fountains, where you and I played many a summer night; and I want to go through the woods, and row round the lake, and be a boy just once again. Will you come, Faustine, to-morrow? Let us leave politics behind us for one long bit of summer sunshine, and let us go and enjoy the old place, together. Will you come?"

"If you like, Victor—yes."

And she gave him her hand in farewell again, and there was no shadow of bitterness on her face.

"*Bien!* that is charming. To-morrow we will come and fetch you. The roses must all be blooming in the garden of the château, and we shall have such a summer-day! *Au revoir, chère, au revoir.*"

CHAPTER VII.

“Come the eleventh plague, rather than *this* should be;
Come sink us rather in the lowest sea;
Come rather pestilence and reap us down;
Come God’s sword, rather than our own.
In all the bonds we ever bore,
We grieved, we sighed, we wept; we never *blushed* before.”
ABRAHAM COWLEY.

PÈRE DAX lived in the north-west quarter of Paris, beyond the Caserne du Prince Eugène; and when Piers and Victor emerged from the quiet little Place St. Etienne, they found themselves near the Temple, passing the Cirque Napoléon, and down the Boulevard Beaumarchais into the Place de la Bastille.

Paris was awake still; the clear darkness of the summer night pierced by myriads of glittering lamp-lights. All down the Boulevards, people still loitered in crowds, as noisy and lively as if the starry sky above them still glistened with the light of day. The Place de la Bastille was radiant; rows of gas-lamps flaring round the

Colonne de Juillet, the golden-winged figure on its summit looming strangely, high up against the blue night sky.

The air was soft and still, scented, as usual, with the mingling odours of summer Paris, in which flowers and cigar-smoke predominated ; and the light, buoyant, exhilarating influence of the clear atmosphere was keener than ever as they passed on through the Place, down the Rue de Lyon towards the river, and turned into a little narrow street running parallel behind the Boulevard Mazas.

They walked rapidly, and said little. Victor's face was clouded with an expression of earnest concern. His mind was full of perplexity ; his heart sore with dark misgivings, with ominous foreshadowings of evil to come. He felt too keenly at this moment to speak of his feelings, even to his friend ; and he felt, moreover, a sting of bitterness, that increased his silence towards Piers. For a chill shade of foreboding told him that the death-knell had rung out, in such speech as they had heard that evening, of the glory of that ideal *embraced by Piers through him*. He was fearful and suspicious.

Piers was silent, too, from the very fulness of his heart and mind, from the whirl of bewilder-

ing new thoughts and suggestions that crowded on him, from the memories of the experiences of the evening, and from the fever of the heart's pulse beating with sensation novel and strange.

He was silent, because he felt instinctively that even Victor's speech at that moment would not be sympathetic to him; because he was aware that, if he spoke, and Victor spoke, on the events of the evening as they had touched each of them, and as their influence lingered on each heart, that Victor would look from one point of view, and he from another. He wished to be silent, or, if he spoke at all, to speak not of politics, not of Communists, republicans, or theorists of any school, but—of Faustine Dax, and the sense of new beautiful existence she had kindled in his heart, in the visions of his mind—in the dreams of Utopia that flitted with witching sweetness through his brain!

The night's work had done much for him in his life's history. But it was not yet over; he had another scene to go through.

In the little secluded street behind the Boulevards, into which they at last turned, there were few lights, and little remaining evidences of humanity active and awake.

Before a humble enough door at one end,

Victor paused. A lamp stood just in front of it, and in its lustre a brass plate might be seen engraved with the name, "Jean Bouchet, Artist de Portrait."

"Artist," said Piers; "is he a painter?"

"He was," said Victor, "of a certain class; took portraits at forty or fifty francs apiece for any one who would sit to him; and designed illustrations for the cheap magazines, when the prospects of his journal ran low. He used to do this; but, since I have been in England, the paper has come into fashion comparatively, and I fancy the plate stays on the door merely as a shelter for a suspicious name. But Bouchet is a moneyed man, I imagine, now; and if he had not those secret circulations on foot, he would have left the Rue Calodien long ago, and courted public distinction in what, in my student days, we used to call the 'Quartier Littéraire.' But his ambition soars far beyond even a leading editorship of any safe concern. Some men seem born with that fascination upon them that makes them ever prefer steering in a leaking ship. It is fatal to a really successful career."

He turned round a moment to Piers, before he rang the bell.

"I am going to write on his staff, you know,

but only for *La Cloche*. I will not give a line of mine to their infamous secret circulations; but I am going to buckle to the other at once, Piers. It is the only work I see open just now to do."

"I do not see the way to any work at all, among all those fellows of yours," said Piers.

"Ah!" sighed Victor, "wait; we shall see. Let us go upstairs."

The door was opened slowly; but, on Victor's uttering a few words in French, it was thrown widely back, and they passed within.

As it closed behind them, they stood in a low dark vestibule; a door on one side, standing open, showed, in the bright rays of the lamp-light streaming in through the window, a rough kind of studio, an easel, a table covered with palettes and paints, with brushes and scraps of canvas. Half-finished portraits, of a gaudy and highly coloured school, stood on the floor round the walls, the large-featured countenances of the bourgeois gentlemen and the huge ear-decorations of their ladies being clearly visible (as the bright streaks of light fell across them) from the vestibule where the two friends stood.

"Up-stairs," said the person who had admitted them; "*montez, messieurs*"—

And they turned to see, half hidden behind the

door, a diminutive creature, who in Paternoster Row would be called a "printer's devil"—a quick-eyed, much-begrimed little *gamin*, raised by the force of superior intelligence and ambition from his paradise of idleness in the sunny streets of Paris to the midnight labours of the *Journal de la Cloche*. A budding journalist! He grinned broadly as they turned towards him, and indicated with an inky finger the way up-stairs.

Up they went.

"To the right," he shouted behind them; and Victor opened the door he indicated, and preceded Piers into a brightly lit room.

Smoke again, of course; the first thing sensibly apparent; clouds of smoke; not delicate cigarettes, such as were admitted in Faustine's *salon*, but clouds, dense, heavy, and reeking, of strong tobacco-pipes—long white clays, held tight between hard-clenched teeth, and long curving meerschaums, from which rose the thick vapour, filling every corner of the room. There were odours of brandy, too, and of *bocs* of students' beer mingling with the coarse tobacco, and together poisoning the hot stifling air. There was a jingling of glasses, a suppressed murmur of voices; the heavy, rough laugh of Jean Bouchet sounded above all. There were about half-a-dozen men

in the room—two straight from the Place St. Etienne, and four others of a type whose political and social character excluded them even from the wide hospitality there.

Bouchet sat at a centre table, pen in hand, ink-horn before him, a mass of papers, print and manuscript, lying at each hand. His rough laugh rose again and again, as he perused the lines before him, and drew his pen through words here and there, or wrote notes interlined or on the margin.

Opposite him sat a short man, wearing a dark pointed moustache, with hair standing on end like a crow's nest or the back of a porcupine, with small, fiery, deceitful eyes, and with little fat hands, which he clapped together with greedy delight, as Bouchet read aloud to him, and as he paused to listen from his own writing, and stuck his pen crosswise between his white glistening teeth.

These two were not smoking; but they were gaining much energy of language, and much inspiration of sublime idea, from the glasses of cogniac that stood close to them. They were conning their most important night's work—the leader for the morrow's secret issue of the *Drapeau*. Near them sat Henri Rochecarre, Comte

de Lacai, scribbling fast, and indulging doubtless in what he long afterwards described as his "façon plus ou moins nerveuse à écrire."

It was a roughly furnished room. Wooden tables and common chairs, a rack for papers, a shelf for a few dirty books, a number of ink-bottles, and piles of journal proofs, were its only contents, save that the mantel-shelf was covered with brandy-bottles, empty and full. The glasses seemed all in request.

Two men sat at a table behind Bouchet, one reading to the other in a low murmur, while, with rapid pen and quick gesture of arrest or continuance to the reader, the other man corrected "proof."

The remaining two,—with the assistance of brandy and tobacco,—were writing vigorously at a third table—articles to be surrendered shortly to the little waiting "devil," and to emerge, for the advance of Parisian opinion, in the morning issue of the respectable *Journal de la Cloche*.

"Ha!" Bouchet cried, as Victor and Piers both entered. "Good!" He held his finger up over his shoulder, as they approached behind him. "One moment, messieurs: wait, I have just finished. Listen! this is the leader of to-morrow for the *Drapeau*."

He continued to read aloud ; and Piers was edified by the views, current even at that date, in the fatal little journal, destined in time to come to shed more blood, to infuse more poisoned venom into the fevered minds of poor doomed Paris, than any other of all the score of lying journals of the Commune.

A shadow of days to come greeted Victor and Piers in the issue of that evening's proof. Victor's eyes glistened angrily again, and a hot flush covered his cheek, as he listened ; and he blushed—for truth, for honour—for the future of France.

“ Can I write for this man ? ” rose the question, again and again, in his perplexed and excited mind. “ Can the same fountain bring forth sweet and bitter ? Can the same office issue journals speaking truth and lies ? ”

“ *Sacré, Bouchet !* ” he exclaimed.

“ *Tiens, tiens, doucement !* ” cried the other. “ I know this is not your school. You want the way paved for you, my little friends, and you will ride merrily some day over the stones ; but you will not have a finger in the laying,—no, no, we will do that—Pyat, Vermorat, and I. Fear not ; we will pave the road, and when it is ready, my soldiers,—we will send for you. Meanwhile, *laissez faire*. *There* is your place, Monsieur Victor—

Fermesch, that will do," he continued, returning the proofs to his opposite friend. "Now, Lescar, listen!—here is the niche for you."

La Cloche was a leading paper, of sound liberal opinions, above suspicion, honest in its profession, and open in its confessions of faith. No man could wish better, as a starting-ground for literary enterprise, than the niche of the leading articles in the daily *Cloche*; and there was no better vehicle to convey views sound, not revolutionary, broad, liberal, and philanthropic, on political subjects, to the public mind than through the leaders of this paper. You wrote with the sense that every line you wrote would be read by thousands of quick, observant eyes, in every shop, café, or manufactory, in every mansion, high and low, throughout Paris, by mid-day to-morrow.

It gave a keen, exciting zest to composition, this rapid transition of thought from the brain of the writer to the minds of the crowds that would peruse his words. The part was one eminently sympathetic to Victor's genius, and offered an immediate channel for the flow of his store of thoughts—thoughts garnered by this time in a harvest of rich treasure, sprung from many a month's hard labour and study, from much patient culture of his mental soil.

“Now, just to-night,” urged Bouchet. “I have promised you for to-morrow. Here is pen, ink, and paper,—we only want a single page; and here is the evening *Courier* for your friend, while he waits for you. Your full signature, you know; they will all recognise you. I sent you the articles we have been writing on your achievements at Cambridge, and our French senior wrangler is expected with excitement. Write, my friend—write.”

Victor took the pen in his hand, and sat down at the corner table prepared for him, taking that place for the first time as a leading journalist of France—the place with which he was destined to be so often hereafter identified, the post—that was to cost him so dear!

“Bouchet had done his work, and he and his companion, Eugène Fermesch, withdrew to a distant table at the other end of the room, and signed to Piers, with rough courtesy, to approach them.

Bouchet poured out a fiery *petit verre*, which he proffered with hospitable intent. Piers shook his head.

“What!—no? I forgot—English; you do not drink *le petit verre de cognac*: *le sherry*—ah! what a pity I have none.”

“Do not mind, thank you,” Piers replied. “I want nothing.”

“Ah, but here—*tiens*. You will drink eau-de-selz, with a dash of cogniac? ah, yes! That is the beverage, is it not, of your English ‘clobs’? A friend of mine in the ‘Jockey,’ a monsieur who is in everything perfectly Britannique, he drinks nine and ten eau-de-selz with cogniac every night, and says it is just as they do in London. Nasty, I think; but nations have their tastes. I prefer ‘cogniac simple.’ You will drink?”

“Thank you, monsieur, with your permission,” said Piers, feeling companionship in the favourite occupation of imbibing something, was necessary to ensure companionable interchange of intellectual resource. “You have a busy life of it here.”

“Ah, very—yes! Very fatiguing, very exciting. We wield the sword of the nations here,” he exclaimed, flourishing under Piers’s nose the inky stump of a much-worn pen. “The sword of the nations, here it is! Yes, the pen! The journal, and what you call the ‘spitch,’ these are the strong power of the times that be. And there is a third power we can use later; do you know it?—the *placard*! Words, words, monsieur; we can do everything in our day by the force of

words. Ah, he is using the sword there, my young friend; by-and-by, doubtless, he will use it well."

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"Piers," said Victor, as half an hour later they stood out in the darkened street again, "I heard much that Bouchet and Fermesch said to you. Words, the sword of the nations—the real power that subverts and alters destinies in nations and the individual history of men. I remember the same idea once spoken in a very different voice—a voice that fixed much in my destiny for me. Did you ever hear Père Lacordaire? Of course you did not; you have never been before in France. But when I was a young lad, just leaving school in Paris here, just before I went to Germany, he was delivering his conferences in Notre Dame; and, Protestant as I was, I went to hear him with some fellow-students who were drawn by his eloquence and name. And his great sermon that stayed most with me was on—*language*; 'the power undying, the power that filtered, and spread, and abode when great epochs of the victories of sword and bloodshed had passed into history, and their influence was scarcely to be traced; the Word that had transformed humanity—the one living and eternal

Word.' I remember how he brought it all out. 'The simple words dropped by the wayside in Judea, living and life-giving still. The swords of the Roman eagle that flourished strong and majestic all around Him, as He moved gentle and obscure—dead, gone, forgotten! And He living and all-powerful still.' I owe it to Père Lacordaire that I reverence the spirit-power in language, the superiority of intellect, before all physical force. I owe it to another (you do not know him either), Père Hyacinth, that I am not a socialist, a republican, and a rank Communist. There are few of these among the young minds who heard his orations, also at Notre Dame, in the year '66, on 'La Famille, l'Eglise, et l'Etat.' These two men made me think new thoughts of life and the things of men; and yet—they were Catholic priests, and I a Protestant. Was it not strange?"

Piers had not time to answer him. They were walking through the Rue St. Antoine, beyond the Boulevard Sebastopol, towards the Palais de Justice, and had reached the Rue Rivoli. A brilliant illumination from globe lamps, pendant above a large swinging glass door, caught their attention here.

"The 'Cercle,'" said Victor, just as the door swung open, and two men emerged. One ran

quickly down the stone steps, and turned and walked before them under the colonnade along the street. The other paused on the lowest step. He twirled his light cane between two slim white fingers, on one of which glittered a diamond ring, and he took his cigarette from his mouth as the two friends passed close to him.

“Ha! *mon ami*,” he cried suddenly; and he stretched out his cane, and touched Victor lightly on the shoulder.

They stopped. It was Raoul.

“Ha, ha!” he said again, with his harsh sarcastic laugh. “Whither away so fast, *mes chers Damon et Pythias*? You show our young Englishman something of *la vie Parisienne*, Lescar?”

“We have been to Bouchet’s,” said Victor gravely, looking into Regnau’s face as he stood on the step above him.

“Hush!” the other replied, with an anxious glance over his shoulder. “Not a word of *him* here.”

“I had promised him an article for *La Cloche*,” said Victor in a lower tone.

“Peste!” exclaimed Raoul, blowing away from his lips the smoke of his cigarette. “Bah! a truce to business. One cannot always be in harness, *cher Victor*; one cannot always lead that

vie sévère. I have banished politics and discussions from my mind two hours ago,—blew them off with the smoke of a ‘regalia’ as I came round the corner of the Place St. Etienne with Eugène de Valéry. One does enough of the great heroics, *mon Dieu!* under the fiery eyes of the fair Faustine. Then, enough!—a truce to weary politics. I met Eusal de Monterancy as I came down the Boulevard, and we turned into Fraté’s and had a little supper together; and then he drove me down for a couple of hours’ écarté here; and I have had a good stroke of luck, and pocketed enough medals of his Majesty Napoleon to make me a liege subject for a lifetime. Ah!” he went on sighing lightly, as he joined them on the pavement and linked his arm within Victor’s, “politics, heroics, patriotism, and all the rest of it are very fine things in their way, and especially under those black eyes of Faustine; but, *Dieu!* the Empire does well also for the golden life of Young France; and even we, leaders of the people, Victor, we need recreation at times. Ah!”

A group of young men followed them closely at that moment, and Raoul paused, turned aside slightly, and let them pass.

“*Bon soir, De Tiernay! adieu, cher Eugène! bon soir, Vieuxchatel!*” he exclaimed, as one and

another passed them, some nodding their good nights, others touching the fingers of their lilac gloves to their lips, as they answered his adieu: trim, smart young specimens of the *jeunesse dorée* of the Cercle these; men, whose strength lay mostly in the skill of their tailors, in the perfection of their *eau de violet*, in the snowy Stephanotis or Daphne sprig that adorned their button-hole, in the faultless fit of their *houbigants*, and the correct twirl of their imperial and moustache.

“*Au revoir*, Monterancy; à demain! You shall have your revenge,” Raoul exclaimed again, as a small man, with a worn, *blasé* expression on his pale face, emerged from between the glass doors, and sprang into a little brougham that stood waiting by the colonnade.

“Poor Eusal! he has dropped a purseful to-night; but it does not matter to him,—he can fill it again in the morning. Ah!” he went on, bringing his attention back with an effort to Victor, as the men scattered and passed on out of hearing, ‘we live many lives in this strange world of ours, and lives that need keeping in distinctive channels, do they not? It would not do to chatter of the Place St. Etienne with these fellows within earshot just behind. Best let

them pass. Well, to business, if business we must have ! You have been to Bouchet, Lescar ? ”

“ Yes. I promised before I went to England to write the leader of *La Cloche* when I came back again, and I found him waiting to claim my promise. I went to fulfil it to-night. ”

“ Well ; and, our ‘ R-ranglair,’ our modern d’Arblay, what are *you* going to make of the mathematical problem of France ? ”

“ I scarcely understand its bearings yet,” said Victor gravely.

“ No, I dare say not. We have gone on apace since you left us. Beckouin, Becker, and, I fancy, Franx over there in London too, have taught the Universalists a thing or two beyond Auber Dax’s dream. Bouchet and Eugène Fermesch, in a quiet way your humble servant, and—in the *Lanterne*, if he can keep it alight—Henri Rochecarre, we are *all* mouth-pieces of the cause. Now we will look to you for help. But, pest ! ” he went on, “ they are vulgar fellows, most of them, are they not ?—always Rochecarre excepted. Really, I wish men could be republican, and all the rest of it, and gentlemen at the same time ; but that seems impossible. After a dose of the smoke and beer in which they indulge over the preparations of the *Lanterne* and the *Drapeau*, it takes a gallon of

eau de rose and a whole box of regalias to make one fit for society again. I hate politics at this hour of the night, Lescar ! One must have recreation, you know. Ha ! where are you off to ? ” he exclaimed, as Victor dropped his arm. “ Hotel Barailles—is this yours ? Good night, then ; *au revoir*. We shall meet to-morrow ; ” and he touched his finger to his lips, replaced his cigar, and strolled away, as Victor and Piers mounted the steps of their hotel.

“ How is a man of Regnau’s colour in politics to be found in the sort of society he was in to-night ? ” asked Piers.

“ Ah ! Raoul Regnau is a man of a common enough type among advanced thinkers, as he would call himself,” Victor answered.

“ But I should have thought the first step in the career of a patriot and a reformer, a friend of the people, was the sacrifice of all that kind of life,” said Piers.

“ Yes ; so *we* say, so Dax thinks, so Mazzini teaches, so every reformer true to the core has said, since reform was first conceived. But Regnau’s type, I fancy, has always existed as well. You know your English proverb, Piers,—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ; well, Raoul does not quite see *giving up*, until it be-

comes a little clearer what he is to gain by it. He lives two lives, as he says,—plays a two-handed game. He watches the turn of affairs, and, I believe, will cut in with any party that comes uppermost. Power, pleasure, gratified vanity, self, these,—as far as I can read him,—are *his* gods. And he has all the characteristics of a gambler: he will play high, and may play wildly some day, but always on his own side.”

“He is a man of some power.”

“Yes, considerable: the power rather of assuming power, of adopting it to himself, as it were; the sort of faculty to which many men are apt to succumb,—the power that, exercised without scruple, can often gain influence before people are well aware. He has a love of power and a thirst for authority, that he veils at present under that gilded exterior of the young Parisian.”

“I do not like his face,” said Piers.

“No; it is a cruel eye, and those red lips under his black moustache give him a sort of sanguinary look it is difficult to define. He is a quarrelsome, duelling sort of fellow; do not you get into any rows with him, Piers.”

“He was amiable enough to-night.”

“Yes; but at the Place St. Etienne——”

“Ah, he was undoubtedly tigerish there: he

did not look at either of us as if he liked newcomers, Vic."

"No ; I wonder what it means. He is not the sort of man to be in love, is he ? He cannot care about Faustine."

"He did not like your appearance on the scene, at all events : I am quite sure of that."

"Ah, Faustine and I have been friends since we were children. It is absurd, if he thinks of being jealous of me. But still—I should not like to see her Madame Regnau."

"No, I should think not !" exclaimed Piers, turning away with cheeks suddenly crimson with indignation. "I should think not, indeed !—that horrid fellow ! Good night, Vic."

CHAPTER VIII.

“A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of flowers that wave before the half-shut eye,
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky.”

JAMES THOMSON.

So ended Piers's first day in Paris.

He stood alone when it was over, looking from his window up into the blue starry sky, listening to the ceaseless murmur of the city far down below him.

How full his mind seemed of new thoughts and sensation. His first day was over, passed at the foot of his chosen shrine, in the atmosphere of struggling liberty, of reform, of universalism, of the new ideal life.

His first day's teaching was over of his new chosen school; his brain was fevered with their words; their voices rang in his ears; he was confused with the jangling echoes of opinions, varied, difficult, and opposed.

His mind was a chaos, and, more than all, he

did not in heart, in feeling, in self-possession, seem—himself. Stronger than the memory of all these contending theorists, and warmer than any enthusiasm awakened by them, was that new glow in his heart, that reflection of the dark beautiful face of Faustine. The soft deep tones of her voice, the light of her eyes, came back to him again and again, and with a keen sense of delight, as he remembered he was to see her to-morrow.

What could it mean? Why had she this power? He scarcely asked himself the question, for in all the range of his former theories there was no reply. He had planned his coming life, he had made up his mind, he had mapped out his history, quite regardless of the old warning and assertion of his favourite philosopher; so it was only the old, old story again—

“There are more things, Horatio, in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy!”

How bright and sunny and delicious was Paris the next morning, as they passed along the streets towards the Place St. Etienne again! Such a stirring life everywhere; such floods of summer sunshine streaming over the gardens and white

pavements, and glistening on the roofs and towers.

Piers felt his heart beat quick, with that sense of enjoyment in all the brightness and novelty that he had felt in the Champs Elysées the night before. The sunshine kindled responsive gladness in his shadowy spirit; the gay picturesque objects met his eye, caught his attention, and charmed him afresh every step of the way.

Paris, on a sunny morning,—it was truly a gay scene! A brilliant, varicoloured crowd filled the streets; costumes of every nation, uniforms of every corps passed to and fro; some hurrying along, others sauntering by the shop-windows, laughing loudly, and chattering with noisy eagerness and idle enjoyment of life.

It was still early, and all the divers trades of Paris were just abroad.

There were the bouquetières, the chiffonniers, the faiseur de tours, the marchands de coco, noyat or fruit, the Zouaves, the Invalides, the vivandières, and all the host of other familiar *habitués* who make up the busy crowd of pleasure and commerce, all eager and brilliant, that stream to and fro, and hurry here and there, through the warm summer sunshine of a Parisian August day.

In the Place St. Etienne Faustine waited for them. They were a little behind their time, for they had loitered as they came along ; and Faustine was impatient.

She saw them from the window, and came down and opened the door.

"My grandfather is ready," she said, as she put her hand in Victor's. "He is coming, too."

"I am so glad. And Henri Tolberg, can we not get hold of him ?"

"No ; he is away, far across Paris at the Gobelins factory. He never can come near us until quite late."

"Ah, I wish we could have had him. He is quite one of the old St. Marteau set."

"He never gets away so early. Good morning, monsieur," she continued, smiling brightly to Piers. The sunshine was reflected even in her dark face this morning, and there was a bright happy gleam of real enjoyment in her eyes as she prepared for their little fête-day.

"Good morning," he answered.

"Our Paris looks gay this morning, does it not ?"

"Charming. I feel as if I had never known what sunshine was before."

"And you look gay, Faustine," said Victor

playfully, touching the broad crimson ribbon that fastened her gipsy hat.

She did look very radiant—younger than she had done in her dark evening dress the night before. She wore a short costume this morning, trim and neat-fitting to her straight figure, light-coloured, rustic, and simple, as appropriate to their country fête. She carried a willow flower-basket slung on her arm, and her hat of rough plaited straw was trimmed simply with the broad crimson ribbon, and a bunch of corn-flowers and poppies stuck on one side.

“Got up for a *fête champêtre*,” said Victor, laughing.

She smiled in reply.

“We are going to gather flowers, as we used to do, in the woods beyond the lake, are we not, Victor? And we will have dinner in the little café by the boat-house, where grandfather used to take us on birthdays years ago?”

“Yes; that is just it. And Piers must go over the château; and I should like to drive him across the bridge to Charenton. It is an odd sort of place, lying out on the island there: he ought to see it.”

“Oh yes, we shall do all the sights. Come along!”

Old Dax came down at that moment, smart and well brushed, also in his holiday attire ; and Faustine greeted him with a tender little laugh of happiness and amusement, as she put on his broad-brimmed hat, smoothed back the thin locks from his forehead, put a snowy fragrant Gardenia into his button-hole, and then drew his hand within her arm and announced him “ready.”

“*Allons !*” he said, when he had greeted Victor and Piers—“*allons !* Do not let us waste time.”

“We shall drive, shall we not ?” said Victor in a low voice to Faustine. “We cannot walk, you know, since Père Dax has come.”

She shook her head.

“No. He thinks he can walk all the way, because he used to do it so often in old times ; but he must not.”

“Good !” said Victor ; “I will settle it all.”

And he ran on before them to the corner of the Place.

Piers stayed by Faustine’s side. How picturesque she looked, as he turned his dark eyes shyly down upon her—how beautiful ! The old man leaning on her arm : the sunshine that filled the little Place, and penetrated the shadows of the chestnuts, and glistened on the spray of the fountains, touched her bright figure with rich contrasts

of light and colour and shade, as she stepped along in her majestic way, her head erect, her eye following Victor's lithe form, as he ran across the square to the corner.

This sunny morning was Piers's *second* experience of that devotion of his life's energy to a great and ideal career; and it seemed, in all its confusion and all its contradictions, something very beautiful indeed—something that floated very high in the spheres of the mystic and sublime.

"Does Paris please you, monsieur?" said old Dax.

"Very much indeed," he answered. "As far as I have seen it, I am charmed."

"There is a great deal of life, and a great deal of colour—a great deal of variety, truly," said Dax.

"Yes; that is what I like," he replied impulsively. "There is such a brightness of life, such a glow of colour and sunshine, over everything."

"Ah! we miss that glow and variety when we go to your London. But yet London is great—very great, and full of strong life as well."

"Too full," Piers answered.

"London!" said Faustine contemptuously, "the city of money, the capital of labour and trade!"

“Not exclusively,” Piers answered. “We have other things in London as well. Art is as well encouraged there as in Paris, though the atmosphere and surroundings may not combine so effectively to inspire.”

“Bah !” she exclaimed, “art is encouraged as a part of the general merchandise; that is all. Here is Victor with a calèche,” she added, before Piers could answer her; so for the moment the argument was not further pursued.

They all packed into the carriage with childish delight in a bit of fun and enterprise; and the heads of their drowsy steeds were turned down the Boulevard, and they trotted slowly under the rows of chestnuts towards the Place du Trône.

With characteristic merriment, the Parisians set themselves eagerly to enjoy their rustic fête, and Piers joined them unresistingly! Old Dax and the two young men lit little cigarettes, and blew the smoke, scented and fragrant, to float with a soft transparent vapour on the clear air. And at the Marché St. Eugène, Victor stopped the carriage, got out, disappeared for a moment, and came back laden with flowers. He piled them in rich confusion of sweet scent and colour in Faustine’s basket, and they drove off by the Porte St.—, away beyond the Fortifications, away into the cool

fragrant country, where the heavy foliage of the chestnuts hang low in grateful shadows over the road.

It was a merry drive. Politics were eschewed, as Victor had ordained before starting. He and Faustine were not to have a single quarrel for the whole of that one bright day; and she threw herself into his mood, and lit up with soft brightness of humour, sweet gleams of sunshine and gaiety coming over her face, such as they of the evenings in the Place St. Etienne seldom saw lighting there. She chose a flower from the fragrant heap before her, to decorate each—a crimson rose-bud for Piers, a delicate stephanotis and fern-leaf for Victor; she bestowed them with all the witching grace of a pretty French woman, and Piers accepted the decoration, with sublime oblivion of his own normal contempt for the rows of his countrymen who saunter in like trophies through the summer idleness of Hyde Park, on a London afternoon.

At Le Grand St. Marteau, they got out at the little restaurant near the boat-house, on the lake; and Père Dax sat down under a broad-leaved lime by the water's edge, put a huge banana over his hat, and slumbered peaceably through the hot sultry hours of the mid-day.

And the other three sauntered a little way, and rested too under the scented limes, and watched the swans skimming over the glistening surface of the lake, and wandered into the gardens and down under the shadows of the old houses into the Rue St. Clive.

The water still rippled in the fountain there; the kings of France still stood majestic on the façade of the old church; the flowers still bloomed fresh and fragrant on the grave in the little corner under the yew-trees, where Victor went and stood long,—silent and alone.

About four o'clock they had a quaint little dinner in a gay green-painted verandah on the shady side of the house. Victor had ordered it; and there was every kind of odd, old-fashioned dish, such as they used to have in former times, when they came as boy and girl together, to keep their birthdays here. He gave the dinner; and Père Dax enjoyed a bottle of rare old Château Lafitte, which the landlord himself served to them. With its rich fragrant bouquet, it was pleasant to sip leisurely in the cool shade of the clematis that hung from the verandah above their heads.

Then came coffee and more cigarettes, and the shadow of the evening came falling over the lake

and the chestnuts, and the towers of the churches of Charenton, across the woods and the waters far away.

“And now for a row!” Victor exclaimed: “it is cool enough. Piers—Faustine—come along. Do not catch cold, Père Dax,—sit in the shelter; and here is another bottle of Lafitte and a whole case of cigars to keep you going till we return. And here is the landlord with the evening *Poste*; that is capital. Now, come along.”

It was delightful, skimming over the water. The boat, a pretty little leaf-shaped thing, just held the three. Faustine, on the scarlet cushion in the stern, held the rudder-cords; Victor leaned back in the bows, singing softly to himself; and Piers took possession immediately of the oars, and with his strong firm stroke set the little boat darting over the water, swift and straight as an arrow.

Faustine was delighted. How cool it was! how delicious! How softly the evening shadows fell round them! How richly the glow of summer light tinted the trees and water and sky! How dark and lustrous Faustine’s eyes shone in its reflection! How beautiful she looked, with the rich contrasts of her colouring:—her flushed

olive cheek and the creamy tints of her southern skin, the dark crimson of the flowers in her hat, and the soft brilliancy of her glance and smile.

Piers pulled stroke after stroke, and looked straight into her face, as he bent towards her, gazing with a fixed earnestness of which she was quite unconscious, as *her* eyes wandered away beyond him, to the fair uncovered head tossed back indolently in the boat's prow, and away from it again to the deep beautiful glow of the fading sunlight on the horizon of the evening sky.

Plash ! plash ! went Piers's steady oars, and the water rippled and gurgled softly under their keel. Bright, sweet, peaceful, was Victor's face as he leaned back, contented and silent. Softened and full of shadowy, changeful tenderness was Faustine's, as Piers rested his eyes upon it, and pulled them dreamily along.

They were silent : it was much too mystic an enjoyment for words. They skimmed over the broad silvery surface, they crept under the shadows of the low-hanging willows near the bank, and they shot out again and threaded between the clustering islands, where the black or snowy swans had their hidden nests.

“Sing, Victor,” said Faustine at length ; and he raised his voice a little louder, and sang.

Piers pulled his oars softly in a low rippling accompaniment to his song,—

“ ‘Bend and dip ; the brown oars drip
 With gems as the rowers feather.
 We have passed the island, and anchor’d ship
 Becalm’d in the sunny weather.

“ ‘Bend and dip ! Like dreams of youth,
 Behind us the blue hills are lying ;
 But nearer come on, as life’s stern truth,
 The islands through which we are flying.

* * * *

“ ‘Bend and dip ! We dream we are bound,
 For some island of the Blessèd,
 Where all good we sought in our life is found,
 All love we e’er possessèd.

“ ‘Bend and dip ! We near the shore
 That must break our spell of motion.
 Is the morning dream of our vision o’er ;
 Have we yet to face the ocean ?’

The morning dream of our vision o’er !” he repeated softly to himself, as he leaned back and looked up into the tinted sky. “Still to face the ocean !”

Neither answered him. Piers was in utter dream-land, and had not a word of practical meaning to say. Faustine’s face hardened a little as she looked towards Victor. In her opinion,

his whole life was floating past in an idle dream. To "face the ocean,"—broad, strong, and stormy over actual life, was just what she would inspire him to do. To battle with the storm she would have him, and she thought him strong enough and all-worthy to ride triumphant over the proudest waves.

"One feels it sometimes," said Victor, "that all our dreams may be, after all, but as the delicious shadowy peace of this still lake, in comparison with the ocean-storms of real contest we have yet to know."

"Fighting with the waves is far grander than skimming easily here," said Faustine indignantly.

"This is very delicious," said Victor, with provoking complacency.

"Yes. But, practically, reducing the metaphor to fact," continued Faustine with eager impetuosity, "do you not think that some active effort of contest, that draws the fullest strength really into action, is a far greater thing than a dreamy indulgence in visions of the ideal, the unpractical?"

"The first point is to have an ideal," said Victor; "some goal, even if unseen and shadowy, to which the spirit can ceaselessly soar, and bathe itself in reveries of purity and light. The

second point is, of course, as you say, action—immediately we see a course in which action can bear, with any truly beneficial bearing, upon our ideal.”

“And meantime you wait and float drowsily on, and life passes, and your strength is all unused.”

“A time like this is not wasted, Faustine. The deepest harvests of the heart and spirit are reared and cultured in hours of dreamy beauty such as this.”

“Yes; but the powers lie useless.”

“Piers gives practical denial to your charge,” Victor answered, laughing. “You and I are the idle ones, Faustine.”

She turned her eyes for a moment on the dark face bending towards her, as Piers pulled with slow untiring steadiness his long easy stroke.

“It costs you nothing,” she said thoughtfully. “You are not putting out your strength.”

He smiled and grasped the oars tightly in answer, drew one vigorous stroke, and suddenly the boat shot forward swift as a lightning-flash.

“There!” she exclaimed, laughing; “it was only dreaming for you too.”

“Only!” said Piers emphatically; and his eyes sank slowly under the quick scrutinising glance of hers.

“And do *you* not like,” she went on—“do you not like far the best some work that brings your powers out to their fullest and strongest extent?”

“I like pulling in a race, certainly,” said Piers.

“Exactly! Every muscle strained, every nerve quickened to the utmost effort of its strength. Of course you like that best, and then—victory crowning an effort. How perfect! Success!—it is the only thing that makes it worth a man’s while to exist.”

“Yes; but you must presuppose a cause worthy the effort and the success, Faustine: there we differ,” Victor said, in an absent tone again from the prow of the boat.

“Victor! Victor! I wish I could inspire you,” she exclaimed, bitterly.

“You have, *chère*,” he answered; and his eyes wandered across Piers’s shoulder towards her face. He sang softly again—

“‘Around the shore breathe everlastingly
Delicious murmurs of the silver sea;
While far off shows, as through a sunny mist,
The glass and fire of the evangelist.’

Hush!” he added gently, as he ceased. “Let us enjoy this quietness and beauty, Faustine, the

trouble and turmoil will come in plenty for all of us in time."

They neared the shore at last, and sprang from the tiny boat just at Dax's feet; and he came down the sloping bank to meet them, with a face bright in the reflection of the sunset glow, and full of soft expression, as if he, too, had been wandering in his dream-land, and been hopeful, happy, and contented there.

Victor drew the old man's hand within his arm as they turned towards the restaurant, and went on with him a little in front, while Piers and Faustine came slowly behind. Faustine's face was full of dark expression as she stepped along, in silence for a moment.

"I wish I could understand all you say," said Piers, suddenly.

"Understand me!" she answered. "Who can do that? I cannot understand myself often, and I cannot make Victor understand me, who has known me all my life."

"But I take in what you say about effort perfectly," said Piers. "I feel, quite as you do, that, while we are dreaming and talking and making plans, something should be done: only what?"

"What can *you* do?" she answered. "What

do *you* care about it?—You an Englishman,—care for the liberty of France!”

“The liberty of man is what we seek, is it not?” he replied earnestly.

“Ah, there you are! You and Victor, and Henri sometimes, and the grandfather; and there I cease to understand *you*. Strange,” she said, absently, “that Raoul Regnau and Bouchet, and men like them, whom I hate and despise, should understand me better, and seem to have more sympathy with me in their ideals, than Victor, who alone is worthy among them all!”

Her eyes were following Victor’s slowly receding form as she spoke, while he sauntered down the pathway, under the lime-trees, a little before them, the old man leaning on his arm.

“I wish I could inspire him,” she went on, passionately. “There is such a career for him; such a field of glory; such a sure success.”

“Where?—how?” Piers asked, stopping, as he spoke, and turning towards her. “What would you have us to do for you? You know you inspire us; you know we would all give our lives at one word from you. Every man of the Universal, every single heart of the Cause, is your servant; and you know it. What would you have him, what would you have us *all*, to do?”

“Do?” she answered. “I would have *him* take his place and rule. I would have all bend before him and acknowledge him ruler. I would have every power overthrown in Paris, in France, and he, the born leader of the people, raised to his true place as commander and captain of all.”

“Him!—Victor!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, the place is his; he has only to take it, but he will not. He prefers obscurity; he prefers his dreams to real efforts to establish his rights and power among them. He is a Utopian, do you not see?—and the work in hand is a work of sub-lunary earth. He thinks of new social reforms; the question is of a leadership in a practical revolt.”

“Against government authority?”

“Against the false powers that be—against all between him and greatness. Victor is a hero: he might be a leader whenever he chose. But I cannot inspire him: he will not be roused.”

“He has his own ideas.”

“Yes, grandfather’s ideas—useless, beautiful, unpractical ideas; useless, I tell you.”

“But great, surely?—pure, devoted and glorious?”

“And futile,” she added. “Victor will not apprehend the working and development of things. He will not see how all has advanced

since he left us. He will not *take in* that action, not vision, is the watchword of to-day. He will do nothing."

"What is there to do? Only show me," exclaimed Piers. "I long to do; I am here to do; and I see, to be done, nothing,—at least, nothing of all we thought."

"For you nothing, perhaps," she answered, impatiently. "But for him, everything. The plan is ready; the revolution and upheaving will come, and if he does not take his stand now as leader, as captain, Regnau will have it, or Rochecarre, or one of those dozen of men quite unworthy to rule and lead."

"I wish *you* would lead us!" he exclaimed eagerly. "I wish you would show us what you would have us to do: we would all do it."

"*He* would not!" she answered, with bitter sadness, as she walked on again, and Piers turned by her side. "He only is worthy: he only is great. I can bend all of them," she murmured as if to herself: "I cannot turn him one inch from his way. He is the only patriot. Others care for themselves, seek their own excitement, their own vain glory; some," she added, contemptuously, "pretend they do it because they care for *me*. *He* give his life at a woman's word! He serve his country

because he is inspired by a woman's eyes ! No ; he is the only great one among you all."

"You were born to inspire us," said Piers earnestly. "You are different from other women : you stand on a height among the people, with the gift in your eyes to kindle power and life in the souls of men."

"Not in his !" she exclaimed. "He is above all ; above me, beyond my power, beyond vain glory, beyond self-seeking, beyond influence from any woman or man ; only worthy, only self-reliant, among all of us. And he will not see it, he will not care ; the power lies at his feet, he will not stoop to raise it."

She thought only of Victor ; and Piers, walking slowly beside her, rested his eyes on her beautiful glowing face, and forgot causes and patriotism, and dreams sublime and heroic, and thought only of her.

Then they drove home ; and Victor sang and laughed and chatted to them all the way from Le Grand St. Marteau to the Place St. Etienne—all the way home, without ceasing, and without once allowing the cloud to gather on Faustine's face again, or the conversation to take a serious or argumentative turn.

So they were very happy.

CHAPTER IX.

“For soft and smooth are fancy’s flowery wings.”

“I have often *dreamt* of a state of things in which every devoted and loving soul in Europe, convinced of the necessity of a creed of fusion, should form one great philosophic, political, and religious association, to which all secondary associations would be united as branches of a parent stem. *Civitas generis humani* has been the dream of all thinkers, from Tacitus to Dante, from Dante to Bacon.”—MAZZINI.

THIS sort of life went on for many months, and after all the true “Universal” would have little to say to Piers Ashton.

They did not want an Englishman of fortune and social status among their ranks: they were a body of proletariats, they said, and had no place for such as he.

Victor Lescar, as one of their representative journalists, found a footing; but for Piers there seemed no need at all.

Other societies would have had him. Raoul Regnau knew conclaves of men who met in little dingy cafés in remote corners of the Boulevards, who would have had him gladly, and

especially his money. But Victor stood between him and such associates as these. He was a Universalist, he repeated ; and Piers was like him, one of the old peace-seeking school.

Raoul laughed grimly, and puffed away Victor's enthusiastic words in a whiff of smoke from his cigarette, and shrugged his shoulders as he turned down the street, and thought that the "Universal," as it now stood, meant other things.

The "Universal" had agents everywhere now—at home and abroad, in Europe and in America. Its centres lay in Paris, in London, in Brussels, Geneva, and Berlin, each centre a scene of contending energy of thought.

Becker was noisy at Brussels ; Beckouin was powerful in Germany ; Chauserette was active and revolutionary in St. Pélagie, sending currents from this secret spring that filtered through every corner in Paris. Franx was grim, silent, and omnipotent in the mysterious circles in Soho.

Among them, everywhere, were dreamers, pure patriots, true philanthropists—Aubers, Tolbergs, and, here and there, a Lescar. And these watched and mourned as the old beautiful dream flowed away from them, and they saw it widening into the stormy ocean, seeming to cover the earth.

What could such as Victor do, as they saw the evil spreading, but make stand against it, and with pen and speech and passionate energy strive to oppose the pernicious powers?—raise voice continually, strain every nerve to purify the stains that blackened the principles of the “Universal” on every side.

Dax’s old vision had indeed been as the corn on the mountain top; it had shaken to the far ends of the earth. But again and again, as of old, the story was told anew; tares mingled with the sowing; the enemy’s hand had scattered evil far and wide; the good seed was choked and hidden, feeble and in vain. There was little resemblance indeed now between the spirit of the Universal and his spirit who had framed the dream, or his who had spoken the words that formed its ancient watchword: “All history points to the realization of the union of mankind.” Self-seeking and sanguinary men filled the ranks of the “Universal” everywhere, and yet—and yet—alas! it was a beautiful dream.

To Piers it seemed, as he loitered on in Paris now, as if he had passed into a new and perplexing existence, there seemed so little connection between these visionary conferences of his and Victor’s in the summer evenings on the banks of

the Cam, and the feverish struggle into which he saw Victor fling his energies now, and with which he himself seemed to have no part.

The old *dream* was still existent, still glowing in bright colours in Victor's imagination, and in his; but the *réality* was a noisy contention of angry voices—a Babel of tongues struggling for influence and individual power, a crowd of sinister societies, of mysterious men propounding strange views, and speaking, in the name of the “Universal,” theories the very opposite to what *they* had sought to propound.

Central among them all stood Faustine, with her beauty, her powerful speech, her inspiring eyes; and to her the Cause meant—Victor. The doctrine was a republic; the aim, power and distinction for him.

And to Piers, for the time being, the Cause became gradually—Faustine. It did not strike him how inactive was his own part in it all, while he could go out day by day, and evening after evening, to hear her inspiring voice, and to feel in her presence eager, ready for anything. In this occupation his time passed for many months just then.

It seemed splendidly heroic to join in those excited arguments, to sing those patriotic and

revolutionary songs, to mingle his voice with hers as they rang out a stormy chorus, to feel his cheek flush, his eye sparkle with enthusiasm, as they inspired each other with the glowing thoughts of the deeds sublime and devoted which they were yet to do. It felt splendidly heroic; and Piers flung himself into it with a keen sense of excited enjoyment, while his ideas became daily more tangled and confused.

He became a genuine Universalist of the Place St. Etienne for all that transitory period of his life; for he went there with the circle of Faustine's disciples day after day, and, like all of them, his dreams of a millennium and a future found their centre in her.

He had many vague thoughts during these months, too, apart from things revolutionary and political—strange, new, alluring dreams, in which the memory of Pollingworth returned to him in all its stately beauty as an English home; and sometimes, Universalist devoted and unindividual as he professed himself to be, he seemed to see himself dwelling there in his own home with a dark-eyed queen bearing rule undisputed by his side.

Faustine became more and more to him daily, just then—the centre of all ambition, all future,

all hopes; and she certainly favoured him with unusual gentleness. She would single him out often from among her many rough adorers, by her enthusiastic glance and smile; and as he loitered by her evening after evening, and Victor was absent at other and busier scenes, it always seemed to Piers that the interest with which she regarded him was different from her manner to any other excepting Victor himself; and he, as Piers often repeated to himself, was her childhood's friend.

The wistful look in her dark eyes as they rested on Victor, moving quite unconsciously about the room, meant nothing, surely, but the interest of old friendship, and need be no obstacle to that sweet glow of first love that was asserting itself so powerfully in his own heart.

First love!—it was sweet as had been the spring of friendship to him,—*to him*, who had left no place at all for love or friendship in the schemes of his life. What a change a short year had worked in his circumstances, in his character, in the misanthropical nature of his projects and hopes. One year!

It had all come to him unsought. He had a friend,—and such a friend as it was the lot of few men to possess. And now he loved; and

life seemed, for the time being, a very perfect thing.

He was satisfied. Dreams, vague and inspiring, fed his mind; hope whispered sweetly of the future; and, for the present, he was with her nearly always, and that sufficed for every wish of his heart. Strange, entrancing bit of life!—experience, through which hearts sometimes pass; in which, perhaps, amid scenes quite novel, surroundings quite unfamiliar, the whole interests become suddenly absorbed,—the past forgotten, all distant and former influences shadowy,—and the present, with one face its centre, one voice its music, one smile its sunshine, one presence its joy, becomes, for the time being, existence and all we ask of life.

How long the sweet delusion and shadowy hopes of this period would have lasted for Piers, and how deeply its influence might have engraved itself on his heart and future life, it is difficult to say, had not fate ordained that on a certain evening, when he went as usual to the Place St. Etienne, where Faustine was holding her court, circumstances should combine to produce a climax in his sentiment and hopes.

He went there, treading his way in that dreamy, half-conscious condition to which love

unspoken, scarce recognised or defined, reduces the mind. And he entered the little *salon*, to find Faustine surrounded by a noisy conclave, of which, contrary to the late custom, Victor formed one. She sat on the crimson sofa; and all the usual members of her society stood or sat near her.

Auber had his conclave in one corner. Henri Tolberg leaned on the mantelpiece near Faustine's side. Raoul Regnau lounged in a chair in front of her. Others grouped behind him; and Victor stood, resting his hand on the end of the sofa over which she had thrown her arm.

He was bending towards her, and speaking earnestly as Piers came in. It surprised him to find Victor here. Their lives had drifted apart during these days. They seldom even dined together; for early in the evening, immediately the Paris working-day was done, Victor's habit was to frequent the Debating Societies of the *ouvriers*, where every night he spoke in answer and refutation of many things they were prone to assert; and later in the evening he went to other scenes—scenes that for Piers, in comparison with the *réunion* at the Place St. Etienne, had lost all attractive power.

But here was Victor to-night.

"I cannot approve, Faustine," he was saying

earnestly, as Piers entered the room—"I cannot, I cannot!"

Raoul Regnau's lip curled, as he spoke, with a hard sarcastic smile.

"M. Lescar's approval is very requisite certainly to all our arrangements!"

"Indispensable!" retorted Faustine, flashing her eyes in defiance upon Raoul's face. "But listen, Victor; *mon cher*, listen. I cannot help myself. Duplat is a clever writer; Bouchet *will* have him as a member of the staff of the *Drapeau*: we must admit him here."

"There should be no law in our society that would involve such a 'must,'" said Victor gravely. "Fear not: Jean Bouchet will do without him. Duplat is a man I desire to meet in no society; much less, Faustine," he added, in a lower and softened tone, "do I wish to see him here."

"Happy Duplat, to have such a champion!—brave Duplat, to confront such a jealous dislike!" said Raoul.

"I am no champion of M. Duplat's," retorted Faustine angrily.

"And M. Lescar no rival?" added Raoul, smoothing his long beard, and glancing at Victor's absorbed and eager face.

“You do not defend him?—that is well. Then he comes not, Faustine,” Victor continued. “You will give no countenance among us, by his reception here, to those infamous articles of his? That is well.”

“He must come, Victor, I tell you: I have promised. Besides, we want him: he must come.”

“We want him!—want an adherent whose weapon is falsehood; whose honour is less than an empty name; in whose writings, as in his spirit, reverence for truth, purity, and human well-being is entirely absent? I tell you, such men are the worst enemies of our Cause.”

“Yet he must come. He is clever; his pen is useful to Bouchet—will be useful to us. He will be here, Victor, this evening.”

“And M. Lescar is defied!” exclaimed Raoul, with a pleased smile and a vicious gleam in his dark eyes. “I am thankful to Mademoiselle Faustine for her defence of my friend.”

“Your friend!—her defence!” exclaimed Victor. “She has not defended him. God forbid she should defend the worst enemies of our land!”

“Enemies! Hold, monsieur; your language is becoming strong. I have called him my friend; and such expressions had best not be

repeated, or you must answer for them, to me or to Duplat himself."

"I will answer to whom you please," exclaimed Victor; "or, rather, I will answer to no one. I repeat again, and I defy you to refute my declaration, that men who write falsehoods about government, about society, about human life, and who scatter these falsehoods in evil language broadcast upon the city, in the circulations of that detestable secret press, are the worst enemies of France, of humanity, of peace, of goodness, and of truth; and such men I will not number among my associates and my friends."

"And yet you write for Bouchet!" exclaimed Raoul contemptuously.

"I have known Bouchet since my boyhood," continued Victor vehemently. "I do write for him: I stand by him, and have joined in with him; and I advance his *Journal de la Cloche* by every effort in my power. And I do more: I strive to expunge such writers as Jules Duplat from the columns of *La Cloche*; and since I have joined him, Bouchet has swept the office in the Rue Calodien of Eugène Fermesch and some others like him. That is what I do with Bouchet; and I hope that together we shall do

much more. The *Lanterne* still exists; but Duplat, a disciple of Fermesch, shall never write in it!"

Raoul Regnau's eyes glittered with hatred as he looked up at Victor's excited and impetuous countenance. It was true, Lescar's influence over Jean Bouchet was becoming notorious among them; and his brilliant articles in *La Cloche* were raising that journal to such a pinnacle as to make Bouchet indifferent to the success of the *Drapeau* or of Rochecarre's *Lanterne*, and to render Victor invaluable in his eyes.

"Then he does not come here—Jules Duplat?" continued Victor, turning with a smile towards Faustine again.

A cloud of restless impatience had settled upon her face. He was working against her positively, straight against her most cherished schemes, and working with an energy and successful talent that exceeded hers. And yet it was all for *him*, and to please him, any sacrifice, any self-abnegation and compliance, was nothing for her to make.

"He comes not?" repeated Victor; and she raised a half-relenting countenance to his.

"Of course not; he comes not!" repeated Raoul, with sarcastic venom; "certainly not, if M. Lescar so commands."

Faustina turned angrily upon him.

“Who commands here save I?” she exclaimed.

“Command! Faustine. I request, I entreat—not command,” persisted Victor.

“There are those whose entreaties are more potent than any commands,” continued Raoul.

“Victor, this is nonsense,” exclaimed Faustine. “Duplat must come; I have asked him here, and I am going to help him to the post which he desires. Victor, we fight on different sides; but we must fight thoroughly on whichever side is ours.”

“*Chère*,” he persisted, “be guided; give your help and influence where it cannot do evil, but good.”

“Pest!” she ejaculated. “Be silent, Victor. Duplat comes here to-night.”

Victor became grave: he raised his head, which all this time had been bent, towards her; he looked round the different circles of faces crowding the room; and he caught his breath for a moment with a quick, impatient sigh.

“Faustine,” he said, “then it must be so; and I must leave you. I cannot meet Duplat as an associate in the same room; I cannot meet him save as an enemy, despised and abhorred. I go, Faustine. Adieu!”

Raoul laughed hard and loud.

“This is interesting,” he exclaimed; “a little quarrel of dear friends. M. Lescar conquered: Duplat, thanks to his fair champion, retains the field.”

Faustine frowned darkly; she glanced with undisguised dislike towards Regnau, and turned half-reluctingly again towards Victor, who still stood hesitating by her side.

“And, ah! here he comes,” exclaimed Raoul suddenly, as the door opened again,—“here he comes, the new editor of the *Courier du Monde*, all unconscious of the peril which has threatened his position in this dainty salon and in the office of the famous *Cloche*. Enter, M. Duplat: let me present you at the footstool of our shrine. M. Jules Duplat, Mademoiselle Faustine.”

Faustine bowed, with a repellant and undecided expression on her countenance, as Victor turned his head away, moved from her side, and the newcomer approached her.

He was sufficiently unattractive in face and expression to justify Victor's prejudice and dislike,—a handsome enough man, with the same dissipated appearance that characterised Raoul—with cunning eyes, and a glance cruel and hard, with manners so self-possessed and self-confident

that even the frigidity of Faustine's greeting failed to discompose him. He merely glanced with a look of inquiry and surprise towards Raoul, as he realised that his self-complacent bow was received with a response repellant and unflattering. He twirled his moustache, and bowed again; then he glanced round the room, as he waited for Faustine to address him, and suddenly encountered the gaze of Victor Lescar.

He started slightly, but instantly recovered himself, and shrugging his shoulders with a Frenchman's cool nonchalance, he raised his eyebrows as he glanced at Raoul again.

Victor bowed gravely, and instantly passed from the room.

Faustine watched him; for one moment her eyes softened and relented, and her lips moved as he turned away, as if she would fain have spoken, and called him to her side again. But he did not observe, he did not even look once her way; his face contracted with an expression of intense pain, of care, and of bitter anxiety, as he turned quickly and left the room.

Faustine threw up her head then, and turned to the new-comer.

"Monsieur, you honour our little "réunions" with a visit? I am happy to see you. Monsieur

Regnau, will you present M. Duplat to my grandfather? He receives his friends in the corner there."

"I am honoured by the introduction," said Duplat in a low tone; "but first, Mademoiselle Faustine, allow me to express to you how enchanted I am to be permitted to present myself here, and how long I have craved the pleasure of the acquaintance I now make."

She bowed slightly, and looked away with restless impatience.

"Will you conduct M. Duplat to my grandfather?" she repeated. "He is there."

And she motioned them away from the circle round her sofa before they could speak again. The two men bowed, and, at her bidding, withdrew.

Piers approached her, and, passing Raoul Regnau's seat, took the corner by the arm of her sofa, where, a moment ago, Victor had stood. He had been conversing, with some interest, with Henri Tolberg, on the state of political feeling among the workmen of the "Fabriques de Tapisseries," while the discussion between Faustine and Victor had been going on; and he approached now, when he observed that Victor's place was empty, to inquire the cause of his departure.

"Victor is gone?" he said.

“Yes,” she answered in English, “he is gone. Ah, mon Dieu ! what shall I do with him ? He is obstinate, fixed in his own ways as ever. What shall I do ? ”

She spoke in the friendly, confidential tone in which she always addressed Piers, and her face became less bitter and hard.

“Why has he gone ? ” Piers repeated. “I have seen almost nothing of him for days.”

“Nor I,” she replied. “He is going his own way, trying to stem an overwhelming current, striving to stop a hopeless breach, wasting his time on all this, pouring his strength out, throwing himself away ; and in vain. Ah, it is hopeless ! ”

“What is the matter now ? ” he asked.

“I cannot tell you,” she exclaimed impatiently. “See, here they come again !—I cannot tell you now. Ah, he was right ! ” she murmured to herself as Raoul and Duplat approached her again. “*Quelle vilaine figure !* But still—the Cause, the Cause ! We must have tools of every kind. Ah, M. Duplat,” she continued aloud, greeting him now with more studied politeness, “you have chosen a fortunate evening to honour us with a visit ; we have gathered in force to-night.”

He replied, and Raoul Regnau added a remark as well ; and Faustine answered again, and Piers

stood to listen, feeling his conversation with her was at an end for the time being.

He turned to study the new-comer, and to listen to the ideas they exchanged. Faustine exerted herself for a few minutes, and the discussion became lively and warm ; subjects, political and social, came one by one to the surface, and on both many astonishing opinions were expressed. Victor was absent ; so even Raoul Regnau found no opponent to his cynical and pernicious theories, and Jules Duplat had undisputed permission to announce his favourite views. Piers, taking them in, as well as his deficient knowledge of their language enabled him, heard many things said, and many dogmas asserted, that only that same deficiency prevented his endeavouring to refute.

CHAPTER X.

“ ’Twas summer-eve, the heavens above,
Earth, ocean, air, were full of love ;
I bent, and, murmuring, vowed to be
The soul of love and truth to thee.

“ The scene and hour have passed, yet still
Remains a deep-impassioned thrill—
A sunset glow on memory,
That kindles at each thought of thee.”

ALARIC WATTS.

PERHAPS Victor's words lingered still, with warning and disapproval, in Faustine's mind ; for, after the first few moments of discussion, during which her brilliant and suggestive remarks had fired each train of ideas, her powers seemed to flag and to fail her, her head dropped, in her favourite position when silent, upon her hand, and she leaned back on her sofa, looking from one to the other of the eager faces with an expression curiously dissatisfied and perplexed.

Duplat said many things on political subjects

that her innate sense of truth and honour made her lips move to deny, but she remained silent; and at length, as he became more and more excited, he said many things on other subjects that called again and again a flush of anger to her brow.

Piers watched her, often surprised at the expression on her face; for the two men spoke now, as they discussed, on with such rapidity and excitement that he ceased to understand them, and did not realise the meaning of those sentiments whose utterance brought the colour into Faustine's cheek.

He had not heard the discussion between her and Victor, so that he was ignorant of Duplat's character; nor did he know that the friends had parted in mutual displeasure, and he wondered why her countenance was clouded with that look of weariness and perplexity, and of absent and restless thought.

"Are you tired?" he said at last, bending down and speaking in a low voice in English, while the other men were still occupied in noisy vociferation—"are you tired?"

She turned her face up to him, and her eyes lost again some of their bitter hard look. His English manner, shy, gentle, and courteous,

without a trace of the covert cynicism, and that admiration undisguised, but only half respectful, which she encountered from her French adorers of the upper class, was always soothing and restful to her. She could turn to him with confidence and a sense of pleasure ; besides—he was Victor's friend.

So her eyes softened, and she smiled wearily, but with much sweetness, as she turned away from the flushed, excited countenances of her “confrères” and adherents, and met the deferential expression in his.

“I believe I am,” she answered. “What is it? Is the salon very hot to-night? It is full certainly, and, *ciel!* they do make so much noise.”

He watched her a moment before he spoke again. She looked, just then, as he liked best to see her, gentle and feminine, her beautiful face shadowy and soft. He wished she always looked so, he thought in silence: he hated to see her growing excited and fiery in conversation with those other men. He adored her in the character of inspiring goddess, glowing with heroism and patriotic zeal; but—he thought again, as his eyes met hers, and as he looked for a moment

into the weary, absent gaze he saw there—he wished that inspiring zeal could be restrained within narrower and more individual limits, that those dark eyes could be taught to soften only as they encountered his gaze, and that zeal reserved for the inspiration of his life!

Duplat's and Regnau's voices rose louder than ever before she spoke again, and several other men joined in.

“This is unbearable!” exclaimed Faustine, in English. “And bah! they have said it all so often before—said it—said it, repeated it, harangued it—and there everything stops. Come, I am tired of this.”

She rose suddenly, and passed through the circle of the debaters; and as Raoul ceased his harangue, and turned to follow her, she signed to him to stay.

“No, no; continue,” she exclaimed. “Finish your discussion; it is important. Convince M. Duplat, Raoul, for me. I will return ere long. Come,” she said to Piers again.

Regnau continued his debate. Piers crossed the room as Faustine had done, and followed her in happy obedience, as she walked to the low-sashed window and threw it open with an im-

patient hand. It gave on to a little wooden balcony, and opened close to the ground: she stepped out.

"I believe I am tired," she said wearily, as Piers followed her still, and leaned on the wooden balustrade by her side. "This is soothing—this is refreshing; this does one good. Look!" and she pointed to the moon rising over the gabled ends of the old houses on the other side of the Place, and the rays that fell, soft and silvery, on the cluster of lilacs and laburnum-trees in the centre and on the white foam of the fountain-spray. "Cool, is it not?—pleasant, quiet, and soothing."

Her voice sank into a murmur; she leaned low over the balcony, and gazed down into the green foliage that grew rich and luxurious over their porch-door, climbing over the window, and curling round the wooden balustrade.

Piers leaned by her, and looked at her. He felt dazzled and bewildered by her unwonted gentleness to him to-night—such a contrast, as it was, to the bitter irony and distant politeness of her manner towards Duplat and Raoul. He felt wonderfully happy, and his heart beat, full of something he thought the time was ripe for him to say—and yet it seemed hard to say it. He trembled, hesitating on the brink.

“Yes,” she exclaimed again, before he had made up his mind to anything, “I am tired of all that—that,” she continued, turning and pointing into the brightly lit room, where the different groups of figures were clear and visible to them, as they stood on the darkened balcony without. “I am tired of that. Look!”

He turned as she bade him. Raoul and Duplat were still discussing, and several men had clustered round them, and had joined in their harangue. They had discussed, at first in friendship, with mutual approval and assent; but they had got further now, and had reached that point (so common, so easily gained among them), a point of dispute! and angrily, noisily, with jealous venom and unrestrained vituperation, Raoul and Duplat were quarrelling—contradicting each other, abusing each other with astonishing warmth. They had both lit their cigarettes, and they had stood up in their excitement. Faustine and Piers could see the two, as they looked into the room, the flushed faces trembling with excitement, the eager eyes and vehement gesticulation, telling all that was not already conveyed to them by the angry echoes of the voices in dispute.

“Patriots, indeed!” said Faustine, with mournful scorn. “*Dieu!* are there no other

men as willing as they assume to be, more worthy than they? I am tired of it all—I am tired of it!”

“Tired of it?” repeated Piers; for at that moment this seemed to him, of all sentiments, the one he most wished to hear her express. “Will you tell me what you mean?” he continued. “Are you tired of Paris—of your mission here—of your associates, your friends? Can it be—can it be that you would leave them all?”

“Leave them!” she said bitterly; “there is no leaving Fate in this world. It pursues, it follows us.”

“But Fate! there may be other Fates; there is choice left to us surely. We may turn from one path to another in this life of ours. Fate may seem to open as a vista before us, but need it always be followed?”

“Fate is everything,” she answered. “We are but struggling atoms in the great ocean of Fate. The strong waves dash us hither and thither; the restless tides rush onwards in the deep heart-currents of our lives: we cannot resist it.”

“But we may mistake, sometimes, do you not think?” Piers continued. “We may think a certain course, certain associates, are destined for

us ; and we may imagine ourselves chained by Fate to continue under their influence and power, and it may all be mistaken. We may awake to realise that another destiny, perhaps less sublime, but safer and as worthy, may be ours."

"What do you mean?" she said, impatiently. "Safety! There is no such word in any fate that could be mine; and I care not, I court not safety. I fear not danger: it is excitement, often distraction, new life. *My* destiny is strongly enough marked out for me: I have never hesitated or feared mistake. My Fate is—there."

She turned and pointed into the salon towards the group of noisy disputants again.

"But may you not be mistaken?" he persisted. "There are other destinies, other works as worthy to be done; and you say you are tired of this."

"I am tired of the disputes and failures; I am tired of the cowardice and delay; I am weary because—well, you cannot understand it all. Why do you ask me? What do you know of my inner life? Why are *you* here among us, wasting your life, for it is waste for you? What keeps *you* here, I say again and again, in the midst of the restless struggles of unrestful France?"

"Cannot you conceive what keeps me?" he

exclaimed suddenly, bending low over the balcony to hide his face ; “ cannot you imagine ? ”

“ I ? ” she answered impatiently. “ You foolish English boy, what can I know ? Surely I have enough to fill my mind and heart in France and her future without turning to puzzle over the thoughts and intentions of men of other lands. Why *you* do not return to your own cold, conventional country, and your own cold-blooded people, I am sure I cannot tell.”

“ But I can ! ” exclaimed Piers passionately. “ Let me tell you : listen,” he persisted, laying his hand suddenly on hers as it rested near him on the balustrade. “ Listen—let me tell you : hear me a little of my own future, my hopes, my life.”

“ Speak,” she answered in suddenly softened tone. “ What would you say to me ?—speak.”

She looked at him with quiet surprise. There was nothing of what she was wont to call the cold-hearted English indifference in him, as he stood up and turned full upon her now. He had her hand firmly between his own, and he continued in rapid, impetuous tones.

“ Hear me, Faustine, our goddess, our inspirer ; hear me. You know how I came here with Victor to become a Universalist—a servant of humanity, a

champion of the Peace-bond, an adherent of the world-wide uniting Faith. And, Faustine, you know how it has been. They will not have me; they do not want my services; there is nothing for me to do among them after all my aspirations and all my hopes. Everything is trouble and confusion: no one seems to know what is right to do."

"True," she said; "true."

She stood straight before him as he spoke, and looked up with some surprise into his agitated face, and let her hand remain quietly in the clasp of his.

"And I would have gone away back to my own country, convinced once more that there was no career, noble and sublime, in which there was any place for me, but for *you*, Faustine."

"But for me? Have I indeed had power to keep alive enthusiasm," she exclaimed with a little sarcastic laugh, "in one of the cold hearts of your chill clime? Ha! has my inspiration, of which they talk, had such a power with you? Ha! with all—with all but him!" she murmured to herself.

"Yes, yes. When I am with you, Faustine, I still feel hopeful—earnest; I still have power, I still aspire; I still think I may some day do

something worth the doing—something sublime and great. And, Faustine——”

“Bah !” she interrupted him. “What is there for you to do? What is there you could do in our affairs?—you, an Englishman; you, of that hard, cold country of people who care but for their own well-being, who seek but their own tranquillity and opulence and peace. You do not care for us, I tell you; you have no sympathy with our struggles; you can never understand.”

“I can, I do care, Faustine; and I wish only that I could make you understand me. My whole life lies in your hands; do with it, order it as you will.”

“Until I order something *rash*, as you would say, imprudent, un-English, then—bah!—you will draw back like the rest.”

“Never!” he exclaimed; “never! Give me the promise, the answer I seek; listen to me. Bind me to your service, give me the seal that you will have me as yours, and I yield my life to you, my conscience, every power I possess, to your Cause and to the aims you choose.”

“My Cause, my aims! How little you understand them; how little every one understands or cares!” she added sadly.

“I care, Faustine—I care only for you. I

wish for nothing but to serve your Cause. I desire no higher fate than to die—yes, die, if need be, in your service and at your will.”

“You care! Foolish boy,” she answered, “what are you saying? You die!—you shed English blood in the Cause of the freedom of France! You understand me!—what do you mean?”

“I mean, Faustine,” he went on again, bending over the balcony, and plucking a spray of jasmine that flowered below them, and glistened in the silver light—“I mean that I love you; that Causes and politics and all things are nothing to me in comparison with you. I love you; and I would take you from all these scenes that wear and tire you—I would take you to my English home, make you there my queen, its ruler, the arbitrator and inspirer of my life.”

“Your life!” she answered, and laughed bitterly again. “And you think you understand me and know my heart, and yet tell me this?”

“Yes, Faustine. My life, I offer it to you here. My future has no hope but you—no law but yours.”

“Ha!” she continued softly,—“a pretty picture indeed! I have been in your England—I know it. A pretty picture! Faustine Dax, of

the Place St. Etienne and Le Grand St. Marteau, Lady Bountiful. Excellent, worthy, and estimable! —a humble, submissive mistress over your English country home! Ah! a pretty picture indeed.”

He turned moodily away.

“You mock me,” he answered; “and I offer you the best I have.”

“Mock, no, poor boy!” she continued, with sudden pathos and gentleness; “no, I do not mock you; I smile to myself only as the picture comes. Your wife, *mon cher*, your English wife, she is waiting for you far away there in England, a demure, fair, gentle thing. I think I see her; and I in that place, *ciel*! And Paris all the time struggling, panting, restless; and I tranquil in English complacency, in plenty and at peace—I! The picture makes me laugh truly; but not you, *cher*, not you.”

“But hear me, Faustine. I love you——”

“Hush, hush! say not such words to me. What have I to do with love such as you can offer—such as you would ask—the love, submissive, patient, and gentle, of an English wife? Bah! boy, you do not know what love is yet, I tell you. You know *nothing* of it, and I——”

“But, Faustine, Faustine, I love *you*!”

“*Bêtise*!” she exclaimed. *Cher ami*, long after

you have forgotten my existence you will tell others the same soft tale. Love is not for me, I tell you. I know what it is—I have realised it; but—it is not for me.”

“Faustine, hear me.”

“No, I will not hear you; but I will speak. Look here,” she said, and she took the sprig of jasmine, as she spoke, half unconsciously from his hand, “you know nothing of me, you English boy, or of any of us. You know nothing of what is in my character, or in my heart, or in my future, or you would never have come to me with such words, you would never have let such dreams take form. To speak to me of love—of the tranquil love of an English home—the idea is wild. To speak to me of leaving my career, my people, my Paris, is still wilder; and to think that I have a single thought of love to give in response to—any one; or that I could swerve for a moment from the aim I set myself—from the service of that life to which my heart has vowed its powers, or cease my efforts, or stay my striving, until that life is crowned with triumph and success that *I* shall have won for it,—mind you, that *I* shall have won,—to think such thoughts as this is to show that you know little of Faustine Dax indeed.”

“I do not understand you,” he answered sadly.

“Of course you do not ; how should you ?—who does ? *He* does not ; no one does. I scarcely understand the contradictions of myself. But you—I understand you. Do not mourn ; do not look sad and disconsolate, when I tell you that to think of love from me is an idle dream. You will thank me some day, when you wander back to your own estimable conventionality and establish with a fair fitting bride the British domestic happiness you think now you would have me to share. Bah !”

“Why do you mock me, Faustine ? Why do you deride England ? We wish France well.”

“Yes ; and in complacent well-wishing you would look on and see France torn to pieces, if it so befell her ; see her struggle, and bleed, and die ! Go !—I know your England. But,” she continued, changing her tone suddenly, “why should I visit my views of your self-centred country upon you. *You* are sincere, I know you are ; you think you are ready to lay down your life at this moment for France, for her freedom, for her glory, at the bidding of Faustine, and you say I mock when I tell you that the day may come when France, in her struggles, will be bleeding and tearful—I in the midst of the bloodshed and

the toil, and you, thanking Heaven you are an Englishman and in peace, will stand by with indifference, complacent and sublime. Ah! I know your country."

"So do I," responded Piers, "and you do us little justice; but, if I acknowledge that we *are* self-centred, practical, material perhaps, wanting in ideality, what more can I say, Faustine, save that if I did *not* feel it, and if I did not aspire to be different, would I be pleading now with you?—would I be here? Make me otherwise: take my life—mould it as you will."

"Shall I take it?" she said, laughing lightly. "Will you be my friend? I believe in English friendships; yes, indeed I do. Will you unite your life with these wild lives that group around my Cause? Will you cast in your fate with the stormy future that is theirs—is mine?"

"I will—I will!" he cried.

She looked up into the face bending towards her in the moonlight, and smiled tenderly, almost pityingly, as she saw the glow of eager enthusiasm that lit its dark shades.

"I believe you would," she said, gently. "Yes, *you* are noble and true; yes, you have enthusiasm, English though you be. You would be a strong help; you would be a pleasant con-

fidence on my side,—near me always as my friend. But no, ah! no; it is not for you. I remember who brought you here: I remember who would hold me responsible for the snares into which, through me, you might fall. I know the dangers; I know the terrors to come. Go, go: I will not take your life; I will not confuse your sense of truth and honour, as theirs there in the room behind us is dazzled and confused. No, no, you must never be one of us! *You* are Victor's friend."

"And if his, may I not be yours also?" he urged.

"Friend, yes, yes; mine, mine,—Faustine's friend, as *she* is; here sometimes, alone with her grandfather, alone with Victor, with you, with all the associations of the sweet old life. But friend of my Cause, mingling with the fire and the fury of life that describes Faustine Dax of the revolutionists of Paris,—no, no, you are Victor's friend: I will not have you; it is not for you. Will you not go back to your England?" she continued, impetuously: "it is better for you. Why stay here longer?—why do you not go?"

"I cannot go, I will not go," he answered, "as long as you will let me come here,—as long as you will call me—friend. Let me come, let

me see you, let me hear your voice, let me join in the enthusiasm, if not in the activity, of your Cause; let me come still, and be always your friend."

"Good. Come, then, if you will, while Victor lets you. I like your friendship. I hate your English coldness; I hate your country,—I hate its spirit, I hate its people; but there's something I like in you."

"I may come, then?"

"Yes, if you like it; come, and when you like it."

"And," he continued passionately, "if I come, may I not hope that *time*, Faustine, may change your feelings (as perhaps you weary still more), may I not love still, and love in hope?"

"If you come," she answered, with a sudden cloud gathering on her brow again—"if you come, you must never speak that word again. Of every one of them, I tell you, you are the first who has ever dared. Once is enough, remember: speak it not again. Love, love! it is the word I cannot bear to hear; it is the one sentiment I hold in abhorrence and in contempt. It is the power by which the whole world is disorganized, I tell you, the one power that seems to subjugate everything we call strength. By it men are slaves to weak, foolish women; by it women

forget to be heroic and strong. I hate love : never speak of love to me."

"But I may hope,—I will hope."

"Do not come here, if you cannot expel such wanderings from your mind. What has love to do with our lives, I ask you? With mine,—bah! nothing. With theirs, in the salon there, nothing, save that through something they call 'love' they are my slaves. With his, with Victor's, *nothing!* Speak not of love to any of us, I repeat, save love of freedom and of France. We are not men and women, I tell you," she continued again, with a strange bitterness that was incomprehensible to Piers; "not children of common flesh and blood, to be happy to love and to be loved. We are patriots—heroes and dreamers! We have the world on our shoulders: we have France to free; we have the blood of our forefathers requiring vengeance; we have a mighty regeneration to achieve. We have no time for love,—no, none of us; not Victor, not one. Do not talk of love to me. If you come here, speak of patriotism, sacrifice, heroism, but never, never speak again of—love."

And with this he was dismissed, or at least silenced. They both turned to gaze for a moment into the cool, still, moonlight air, and the night-

breezes blowing on Faustine's forehead and on Piers's flushed and agitated face had tranquillised both, before Raoul Regnau's voice behind them interrupted their silence, and they had to turn to receive the farewells of the dispersing guests within the room.

CHAPTER XI.

“Fancy enervates, while it soothes the heart,
And, while it dazzles, wounds the mental sight.
. The real ills of life
Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared—
Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife;
Its guide experience, and truth its guard.”

JAMES BEATTIE.

THIS evening was the climax of that particular phase in the history of this portion of Piers's life.

The repulse of first love! It was very bitter, and he felt it was quite hopeless as well—she would *never* love him! She could not love; or—at all events—her love was not for him.

He suffered very bitterly and very much for some time, but he rallied again! The wound had not penetrated to the heart-springs. He *could* be her friend, and find pleasure in their friendship, and as such he soon resumed his daily visits to the Place St. Etienne. His dreams of the future, however, lost again at this point their

romantic element, and he experienced a violent reaction towards the heroic and sublime; and in this mood he found he could continue to resort to Faustine's presence, notwithstanding the suffering she had ruthlessly inflicted on his heart.

He went, he told himself, because in her presence he was still sensible of soaring desires for some great career, while with her he felt capable of heroic action, ready for effort and enterprise.

They established a "Platonic friendship," as they called it, and—*all* meant Faustine, still! She did a great deal for him; she awoke in his being the dormant sensibilities to the beautiful, the artistic, the picturesque; she gave his character a poetry it never lost again.

So, often in friendship, women create a power of sentiment whose fruition is to gladden other lives. So early fancies colour and intensify the inner history, even when they may not mould the external conditions of a life. Faustine did much for Piers, and it was due to herself entirely that all she did was good.

She brushed aside from between them all risings of sentiment, and she stretched her hand across the Channel to clasp his as a friend; and as a

friend she did much for his character, though at that time she made him waste his life.

So it went on a little longer ; Piers in this dream-land of his Platonic friendship, and Victor struggling with pen and speech to get a footing for *his* theories of truth. And the life of Paris rolled on still, glittering, gilded, and fair on its brilliant surface, heaving in the living masses of its under-currents with energy ominous and strong.

These under-currents of surging tumult, which have since flooded many a life, beside the little group of young eager spirits, passionate and full of glowing enthusiasm, with which we have to do !

It was after a long period of this dramatic existence that Piers sauntered home late one evening from the Place St. Etienne to his hotel at the end of the Rue Rivoli. He was alone. Victor had left Dax's house early to go to join some fiery discussion that had been carried on that night at a secret meeting at Café Lafitte.

Piers returned home without him, after the usual enthusiastic evening. Faustine had been very inspiring through all the hours that he had lingered in the circle round her to-night, and his feeling, as he sat down at his window in the Hôtel

Barreilles, was, that life, in some mysterious way, was a very interesting and delightful thing; that he, individually, was destined to take some glorious and conspicuous part in it, in some heroic and self-sacrificing crusade.

Against what, or in what cause, seemed still indefinite and vague.

Meanwhile they had talked about it, as usual, and they had sung "Mourir pour la patrie" and "La Marseillaise" with closed windows and barred doors, and they had all felt heroic beyond any common destiny of man.

Faustine's dark eyes had glistened grandly; they had softened often with lingering kindness upon his face; they had glowed with deep feeling and enthusiasm as she sang, and her voice had often softened tenderly as she called him "her friend;" and Piers felt to-night the full power of her strong inspiration. If he could only see where the great destiny to which she pointed lay for him; if he could only grasp the reality of what *he* ought to do.

He sat down and covered his face with his hands for a moment, in that intensity of feeling to which they had all excited each other, and the vision of that abstract intangible ideal seemed to sway his spirit and overwhelm it.

He sat thus silent for a long time, and then suddenly he raised his head, and on the table before him he saw—an unopened letter. It was addressed to himself: it had been sent *poste restante*, and no doubt Victor, in fetching his own letters, had found it lying for Piers in the post-office, and had brought it here.

He took it up, and at a glance recognised the handwriting. It was that of Frederick Thessullson. It brought back instantly a stream of old memories and a rush of association—Cambridge, England, home. He opened it, and at the first line his face became grave and earnest.

“MY DEAR ASHTON,” wrote Frederick,—“In the recollection of my life at Cambridge, now becoming to me a distant and pleasant memory, the figures that stand out in strongest relief against the general crowd of my associates there are—yours, and that of Victor Lescar. You have passed away from the scene of my life, both of you, and at this hour I do not know even where you are. But that recollection is too potent, too deeply rooted in the interest of my heart, to allow of its passing lightly away. I cannot admit the thought that we have really separated

the channels of our life-interests for ever. I cannot believe that you have ceased to regard me—as *I* regard you—with warm friendship and with deep concern. I cannot persuade myself that you will not care to hear of me and my enterprises, for I have an eager and growing wish to hear about yours. What are you doing? To what work have you turned those powers, so living and vigorous, those intellects of yours, so rich and strong?

“If this ever reaches you, let me have an answer; let me hear what you are both *doing* in the world.

“As for me, life has met me on the very threshold of the University. I have never had a moment’s hesitation as to the course I was destined to pursue: I have never looked backwards, or from side to side; I have plunged into my work with heart and mind, and it satisfies and absorbs me. You know enough of my old tendencies to conceive the sort of career which I would adopt as mine. I have been possessed, since the earliest conscious thought I can remember, with but one idea—the condition of my country, the battle of the Christian—the field of the combat of Christ; and I am aware that these questions, my two dear friends, under the various forms in which

they present themselves to different types of the human mind, were likewise the subjects that possessed you.

“I can never cease to remember the happy intercourse of thought we exchanged on those topics through many an hour at Cambridge. I can never lose the sense of the pure idealistic beauty of Lescar’s mind: I can never cease to have strong hope and confidence in the earnest integrity and high aspiration so evident, dear Ashton, in yours. I am eager to know the channel through which these flow towards their destinies of achievement, and curiously interested to hear whether we can trace, in our various life courses, signs of the true similarity in our deepest intentions and desires.

“My life I can quickly lay before you. One of those events we are prone to call accident led me, just as I was leaving the University, to visit those unknown regions from which I now date my letter, St. Bethel-in-the-Fields, and that accident has decided my life.

“I have become what people call ‘a philanthropist,’—a word that bears many meanings, a name that has been used to describe many and very different men. A gleam, though faint and feeble, of that wonderful passion has entered my

soul ; the passion that thrilled in John Howard's delicate frame and feeble spirit, and gave him supernatural strength ; the passion that glowed in men like Brainerd, Jordain, and Moffat, in our own time,—in the Augustines, Xaviers, and St. Paul of old ; that passion that lives in a new life of its own, that lifts the spirit beyond consequence, beyond mortal existence, beyond the world's failures and turmoil, until, amid perhaps labour and weariness and danger, it leaves the soul resting in that mystic and wondrous peace of which Brainerd speaks in description—

“‘I felt a mighty calm come falling o’er my soul, that could
not borrow
Its hue from chance or change—dark children of to-morrow.’

“In that peace only, for careers such as I have chosen, lie strength and energy, courage and the element of success.

“Practically described, my life is passed in a physical and spiritual ministry, in occupations that combine the political economist with the visiting clergyman and the inspector of the Bureau de la Bienfaisance. All these posts I found vacant ; all these requirements I found here. I have established a bureau to meet the wants, urgent and immediate, that crowd around

me. I hope to see an old friend, Ernest Walgrave, established before long as the clergyman, and to take superintendence in the schools; and then—I shall have more leisure for the third branch of the profession, and the one which, in a political and philosophic point of view, most interests me,—the economic details.

“I find that, to be really useful in the career which I have chosen, a man must pass through a period of passionate enthusiasm of sympathy, and reach a condition when all his coolly critical and analytical faculties can be fully exercised; when cases and circumstances in all their infinite varieties can be tested and duly weighed, conditions traced to cause, action to influence.

“The life that passes before me daily, constitutes a practical and experimental illustration and test of many of those opposing doctrines and theories we used to propound to each other in the Conseil de Douze at Cambridge. We discussed the conditions of social life then in all its depth and range. I see it enacted before me now. You remember our topics,—Baring eloquent on pauperism, Calthorpe strong on private charities, Lawler on government intervention, Fane on the clergy, Raymond on taxation, Edwards on rich

and poor. There was much truth, there was some fallacy, in all they said. Baring was right as to the facts in his statements on the enervating influence of the pauper-laws. There is no doubt that that Bill, so humane and excellent in its intention, passed by Queen Elizabeth, on which the pauper-law was founded, and again the passing of the second Bill by William III., made provision for a state of things that has increased through the generations, and is still increasing. There is no question about it; there is some wrong theory at work at some point of the organization of public charity.

“Pauperism is increasing in our great capital with a rapidity I could not have credited, had I not come to live down here and watched its operations for myself. We want men of intellect and power to cast themselves into the consideration of this subject. It is urgent. Here—I see results in their full development—the pauper. Many degrees away I see the causes—the source from which the pauper drifts,—the man who must become one as the inevitable ultimate of his life; and I want help for him. I want young power, vigorous, active, and thoughtful, and possessed of influence, to take up the chain of action at that point of social existence which I

could indicate as the prolific source that feeds the pauper-stream.

“It is a politician’s question more than a subject for private enterprise. Its germs lie in a deep soil of national conditions, and touches subjects of national taxation, such as the politician alone can reach.

“Raymond’s views on taxation handled one point, especially what he used to say on the ‘*Harmonies Economiques*,’ you remember, on Taxation, direct and indirect, on the taxing of the common necessities of life—the daily necessities of the honest and labouring poor. I want to see everything removed, in taxation and government demands, that makes life and its stern necessities, independence with sufficiency, more difficult for the frugal hard-working man. I want taxes gone from the small requirements of their daily life.

“I have come to see, in the course of practical effort towards a realisation of my ideal dream of a Christian crusader’s life, that philanthropy is less an abstract career of sentiment and sensibility than it is of energetic action and economic thought—less the work of private devotion and beneficent charity than of political organization.

“I want to see the condition of the pauper, and the cause that produces him, made a question of first importance as a national and, so to speak, a *secular* thing. It closely concerns us all.

“That word ‘secular’ leads me to refer, as I close, to a conviction that grows daily stronger in my mind, as I watch the workings of human life around me here. The conviction of the great error we commit in the heavy insupportable burden we cast, in the matter of philanthropy, upon our clergy.—A question which is one of national policy, and which is a deep responsibility to every individual among us—is left to weight the hearts and clog the spirits of those same men to whom we commit the task of instruction in eternal things.

“We expect to receive, Sunday after Sunday, from the minister in the pulpit some fresh thought, some new inspiration, some ray of spiritual light, such as he can receive only in the pure peace of spiritual contemplation—in that holy quiescence which alone feeds and enriches the mind with celestial truth. And he comes to us Sunday after Sunday, and in his life between there lies a week of labour, heavy and heart-rending,—labour that wearies the brain, depresses the spirit, and blights the imagination,—labour

that draws every fibre of the frame into sensitive sympathetic exercise,—labour which it seems impossible to reconcile with a strain on the intellectual powers.

“The whole burden lies on them; the physical burden of responsibility, the spiritual burden of their mission to our souls. It seems all wrong to me: they are doing our duty as well as their own—thinking out secular national thoughts we should be thinking instead of them, organizing schemes of reform we should see completed before them on their way. We leave philanthropy to our clergymen; and a question for us all, and chiefly for us young ones who would be politicians, it ought to be.

“On many points where political organization could do many things I want to see enlightened economic policy acting in unison with our church. We want pioneers—that is the name by which I would call the part I am taking now,—clear-thinking men to analyse, to examine, to probe the wounds, and conceive the healing scheme.

“Then we want in Parliament deep-hearted workers to take up the cause.

“We do not want blind Utopian theorists; we do not want simply noisy talkers and aimless

agitators. We do not want to stir up excited feelings in the country: there is *feeling* enough among every class of man; there is sympathy alive; pity for the poor in these times strongly agitates the rich; the condition of our nation excites in every rank of society the most earnest concern. But we want reason, consideration, and activity brought to bear upon it all.

“We want the crowd of frivolous men more earnest, more obedient to their higher impulses, more faithful to their better selves; and we want earnest men to be more practical, less visionary, less individual and self concentrated, and so more productive, in the ‘excelsiors’ of their lives. We want above all *young* men—given to the work, volunteers ready, educated and devoted, to fill the ranks as they thin, to breast the broad front of the national difficulties as they advance all around in our land.

“And that brings me, my two dear friends, to my first question again. What are you two doing? How has all this shaped itself to your minds? What course lies before each of you in the intentions of life? I know the rich store of strength in both: in what contest are you putting it forth? Let me hear from you. Let me have a lengthened expression of your views,

in evidence that you forgive and appreciate the length of the homily, by which I have tried to make you acquainted with mine. Once more,—what are you doing?

“Yours faithfully, dear Ashton,

“FREDERICK THESSULLSON.”

CHAPTER XII.

“And yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.”

“I regard in you the calamity that has arisen as little more than the indignant struggles of a pure mind with the low realities around it; the fervent aspirations after more congenial regions, and a momentary blindness produced by the fixed contemplation of things too bright for weak human vision.”—SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

WHAT answer could Piers make just then to such a letter? What was he doing? What responsive picture could he draw to this description of a life engrossed in eager effort, spent in untiring devotion, active and practical, to the causes they had all called theirs?

Frederick was in the midst of the battle. Though he said little of his own enterprises and achievements, Piers knew him well enough to recognise the echoes of his devoted spirit, highly wrought and deeply agitated, in his engrossing work.

The newspapers had already told him a little of Thessullson's and his doings: this letter from

himself seemed to make the picture forcible and clear. Frederick had found his work, and was doing it. And Piers? He sat holding the long letter dreamily in his hand when he had finished it, the flush upon his cheek evincing the strong feelings it had aroused.

These lines of Frederick had awoke in him memories of many days, during which a high-toned political career had appeared much in this same light to him. The recollection came back to him of those deep sentiments of sympathy with which he had once regarded the suffering and the poor; and back came the memory of the old schemes of his life—the vast universal reform *he* was to organize, the mighty social constitution he had once dreamt himself destined to found, and the active eager part he had once intended to take among the great agitation for the good of man.

And now? What a strange new sphere in his own individuality had been opened up to him! How different were his thoughts upon all these points from his old thoughts, when, an enthusiastic boy, he had mingled his vast dream of human regeneration with Donna's, and cast her small aspirations of beneficence into a humble and silent shade!

How strong he had been then in his own young energy, in his own wisdom, his own intention, his own complete sufficiency unto himself! No one was to help, or teach, or guide him in these days. He, alone and single-handed, was to regenerate the world.

And now? The world was still in bondage as ever; vast multitudes still stricken with poverty, suffering and sickness, and dwelling in sin; and he had found a new life, and lived in a mystical dreamy existence—a life taking its colour from an influence for which he had made no provision in his old theories and schemes.

This picture of practical philanthropy, forced upon him by Frederick's letter, jarred upon his present state of mind. Surely he had advanced, he thought, and passed beyond all this. The dreary unbeauteous considerations of city building and drainage, of pauperism and taxation and poor laws, had no fascination for him just then; surely he was far beyond them. He had reached "life in the ideal." Surely all this from Thessullson was simply "British." Was Faustine right? Her favourite complaint against his compatriots, against Britons, was their dire absence of conception of the ideal.

Was this letter of Frederick, awaking these

curious memories within him, but a voice from that English spirit which Faustine condemned so continually and with such eloquence?—the spirit, low-flying and unimaginative, that, as she often and passionately ejaculated, had banished Byron and vituperated George Sand,—the spirit that would chain us in old grooves, and tie down our souls to practical and material things. Such men as Frederick Thessullson, who were contented to pass their lives amid surroundings unbeauteous and uninspiring, must be incapable of the enthusiasm that would echo the language of Faustine. Such as he were ignorant of the fascination of the ideal. Surely the heroism that glowed in their hearts as they sang their patriotic songs to Faustine's accompaniment at the Place St. Etienne must be a far higher form of spiritual liberty, and more sublime, than anything that Thessullson could conceive.

Piers was young yet: the age of passionate sensibility was not over for him. Beauty had but lately asserted its potent sway, awakening his dormant nature to full consciousness of itself. His heart, though very earnest and deep, was after all a young heart; and he was chained to the ideal at that moment with a power for which he knew no name.

He was still what Faustine had made him, dreamy, imaginative, idle, and subjectively content. It remained for another, perhaps, some day to make him active and practical, if he were ever to fill any useful office among the ranks of men.

But Faustine was very beautiful, and he clung still to what she called the ideal ; he still adored his goddess in that form and in that light in which he saw it through her.

So he took up his pen after some consideration, and wrote to Thessullson.

“I cannot tell you,” he said, “what a pleasure it is to me to receive your letter. Time, truly, has drifted us apart. You have found your course in life : you are following it in all its nobility and devotion. You ask me concerning mine.

“When I look back on my life, towards the early training of my boyhood, I know now how exceptional it was in circumstance, how preparatory in its nature for the post in life I seem destined to fill. I have no doubt it is the same with you. Your mind always pointed to the direction in which it now leads you ; your whole tastes and character foreshadowed the high mission to which you are called.

“For myself, however, I know I am writing

to one who will understand me when I say—that that mission you have adopted, and which you describe, does not embrace the picture of *my* life's destiny as it appears to me. How can I describe to you myself?

“I suppose it is a characteristic of our age that we, the youth and strength of the generation, are long restless and seeking, and not easily content. I think this is an embryonic age; surely everything suggests it: an indefinable spirit pervades everywhere; a life strong but intangible agitates through all. Surely it is so in everything.

“Take the poetry of the age, who can understand it? It is sympathetic to us, but untranslatable even to ourselves. Take the controversies of the age; they touch theories on subjects political, social, and religious, they suggest thoughts elevating and inspiring, but difficult to repeat or understand. Take the art of the age; all points to the mystic, the embryonic, the occult, in one word—the ideal.

“This is the spirit, surely, of our times. It is a soaring, soul-elevating tendency within us that cannot be changed and *degraded*, I would almost express it, to sublunary and merely practical things. I think we must wait and hearken to the voice, till we can understand which way it leads.

The ideal, the new thought, the new excelsior, 'the banner with the strange device,' it floats above all our heads ; and in politics, in life, and in religion we must let it lead us on.

“ I have learnt to recognise it in myself, of late, more clearly than I have ever done. It is, perhaps, the result merely of living in the pregnant atmosphere of this ever-restless land, where the very wind is laden with the voice of Liberty, and the undying call is for freedom in thought and action, in body and brain ; where the passionate heart of a great people seems to throb around us with the feverish energy of unutterable life ; where the breath of patriotism is fervent, eager, and impossible to stifle into silent and submissive peace ; where the sense of a future, a coming climax, of the thoughts and energies of life, seems to fill the air ; and where you experience, in spite of yourself, the keen exciting sense of expectation, and of assurance that great results of development and achievement must come. The voice of the people is urgent and ominous here. The spirit of Liberty is bursting its fetters, and unfolding its silvery wings. The ideal of the world's full perfection in liberty is ready to be revealed and accomplished.

“ I cannot think that all this current of mind

towards the sublime and idealistic can be an unfortunate element in the mental history of our age. Men are too prone to material satisfaction as regards themselves and their efforts for others. It is not enough surely to feed the populace, to clothe them, to educate them even in the rougher accomplishments of life. We want national sympathies raised to appreciation of higher things, of which—‘LIBERTY INDIVIDUAL’ and—‘UNITY UNIVERSAL’ would be first and chief.

“I cannot at all tell you, my dear friend, in what direction my life’s efforts will ultimately turn. At present I am content to contemplate and learn, and to leave the moulding of my destiny to circumstances as they come.

“Meanwhile, it is really a pleasure to hear of old friends and associates ; so pray accept my warm thanks for your letter, and let me hear again. In conclusion, you know my uncle, — guardian rather,—Sir John Graeme : do you ever see him in London ? He is evidently angry with me, for he has not written to me for long. Tell me, if you can, something of him ; and believe me ever faithfully yours,

“PIERS ANNERLEY ASHTON.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“Ah, sirs, revile him not!

Without such, we should be a motley crowd
Jostling each other on the great highway
Of this world's passage. Progress there would be none;
But each one, striving for himself to gain
A footing, would tread down his fellow-men.”

PHILIP LATIMER.

WHEN Piers had finished this letter, he despatched it with some sense of having achieved a success.

Frederick had sent him his views—old-world views and old-day doings. He would now have some notion, in contrast, of the sublime and ethereal nature and expectations of his.

He had just despatched his letter when Victor came in. They still occupied the same sitting-room in the Hôtel Barreilles; and Victor had turned in before going on up-stairs, as the porter had told him M. Ashton was there, and had even at this late hour just despatched a letter to the post.

Victor entered. He looked grave and weary : the continuous months of feverish effort and excited controversy were telling upon him. He was not floating in a quiet dream-land of love and ideality and Platonic friendship, like Piers Ashton : he was in the heart of the kindling battle, already straining nerve and energy, night after night, in passionate argument and feverish speech.

Faustine was nearly satisfied ; for Victor was being drawn deeply in, and, as he went deeper, he came out daily with fuller and more potent efforts of his intellectual force.

As she had foreseen, his speech was weighted with power. As she had hoped and anticipated, men fell back before him and acknowledged his leadership. As she had prophesied, his silvery, fervent eloquence silenced the fiery vituperation of Raoul Regnau, Jules Duplat, and Eugène Fermesch. He was passing quickly to his place among them, and men were acknowledging his genius and power.

And clouds were still gathering on the French horizon, and still the deep undercurrent of social life streamed ominously on. Ah ! if all their leaders had been like Victor, and every soldier of France nerved with a patriotism as pure as his !

He came in often as now, depressed, anxious, and weary. Piers gave him Frederick's letter.

"Ah!" he said gently, and he sat down and swept back the fair waves of hair that fell heavily over his forehead. "Ah, Frederick Thessullson! How pleasant to see his handwriting again!"

He seemed more glad than Piers had been to receive and read that letter. To him it was repose and refreshment as he perused it; the pure clear expressions of Frederick's spirit contrasted pleasantly with the fevered and poisoned utterances of many harangues he had heard to-night. To him it was a letter soothing and enjoyable, while to Piers it had been as an influence rousing and touching him with the sense of disturbing jar.

"Ah!" said Victor again, when he had finished it, looking up as he spoke with a wistful light in his eyes towards Piers, who sat dreamily, while he was reading, in a large chair opposite him, on the other side of the hearth. "Frederick is a happy man: he has found a way in the wilderness, Piers."

"I do not think he has found anything new, has he?" said Piers. "He seems to me to be following simply in old accepted tracks."

“No ; he has done more than that. He is *at work* : he has found a key to the labyrinth, and he has only to go steadily on. It is a happy thing to be an Englishman—there is no doubt of it. You can see something, at all events, which may be done. Work, such as Frederick’s, will have eternal results.”

“And ours, Victor?”

“Yes, yes ; ours is eternal in its desires also,” he answered, “if we could only begin. But there is such a confusion, such opposition of opinion : it is a hard fight to get a ground from which to start. I envy Frederick ; yes, undoubtedly I do.”

“I do not,” said Piers, dreamily.

But then for him and for Victor, just at that time, life wore a different hue !

Since the disagreement between Victor and Faustine on the subject of Duplat, he had gone less than before to the Place St. Etienne, feeling how little sympathy Faustine had with his real efforts and aims. But still there had been a reconciliation, and their feelings of personal friendship were as warm as before ; and it was just the morning after the arrival of Thessullson’s

letter that both the young men, before they left the hotel, received a note from her.

“DEAR FRIEND,”—she wrote in French to Victor,—“In case I should not see you till nearly the evening, I write to say that Madame Carlo d’Alnigni has arrived in Paris, returned from her Russian tour, and she sends me a little letter to ask if we will dine with her to-morrow—I and the grandfather; and she adds—you, if I can find you. She hears you are in town, crowned with English honours, as she says; to which she, by her admiration, wishes to add a humble olive-leaf. She also says that Madame Prioleau is with her; she found her somewhere in her travels, and persuaded her to come on here—so we shall meet *her* again, which will be pleasant; and, finally, Madame Carlo adds that Raoul Regnau has informed her that you have brought a young English friend over with you, and she is eager to be introduced to him. She adores the English, she says, which I never knew before. However, M. Piers must do as he likes about acceptance. At all events you, *cher*, must not disappoint our old friend. I enclose her card for both. Let me see you early to-day, if possible. Raoul has already paid me one visit, and I extracted a latent

intention from his scheming brain. He has a mission, a journey in prospect, and one, that if Paris can spare you, I would rather see, *cher* Victor, performed by you.

“*À toi,*

“FAUSTINE.”

“That is famous!” exclaimed Victor, as they sat together at the table of the restaurant at their hotel door over their breakfast, and as he read Faustine’s note, and tossed over the card to Piers—“that is famous. Madame d’Alnigni is returned, and Madame Prioleau with her. I shall be pleased to see the first for old friendship’s sake, and I should go any distance within the range of possibility to hear Madame Prioleau’s voice again.”

“Who are they?” asked Piers, with shy dissatisfaction, as he held between his fingers the smart gold-emblazoned invitation-card. He contemplated it with astonishment and no little horror as he read his own name filled in, in Faustine’s handwriting, amid the flowery devices of caligraphy in which Madame Carlo d’Alnigni entreated his company at dinner. “Who on earth are they?”

“Madame Carlo,” said Victor, “is an old St.

Marteau friend. She lived, when I was a little fellow, in a pretty villa beyond my mother's garden; and she and my people were all devotedly attached. She was very kind to me in those days, and ever since; and through us she took a desperate fancy, years ago, to Faustine. She beguiled her away with her once to travel in Italy; and if Faustine had been tractable and submissive, Madame Carlo's house would have been her second home. But they differed. Faustine left her, and they have been, happily, better friends ever since. She has a little apartment in the Place Vendôme, and, whenever she turns up in Paris, she sends for Faustine and me; and we always go. Faustine is really devoted to her, and I have the kindest feeling for the old lady as my mother's valued friend. So we must all accept. Let me see: to-morrow the Frères Piccolo meet; but that is not till twelve P.M. Yes, I can dine with the dear old madame, and go on there in time."

"And, Madame Prioleau?"

"Ah, she is less easily described! *What* she is, you must judge for yourself in every way. What she *does*, or has done rather, I can tell you. She is American—a Southerner; she was the leader of the band of lady-nurses who went out on the fields of the great American contests to nurse the

soldiers of the army of the South. She learned her profession there; and in Italy, in Sleswig, in Austria, at home and abroad, she has been practising it ever since. She is one in a thousand, is Madame Prioleau."

He spoke with the tender enthusiasm with which Piers might perhaps at that time have spoken of Faustine. There was intense admiration and almost reverence in his tone.

Piers glanced curiously at him. Something he had learned lately, within his own heart, prompted his next words, the question springing from a fancy half conceived.

"Is she married?" he said.

(Could *she* have been Victor's shield from the dark eyes of Faustine?)

"I do not know," was Victor's answer, in a careless voice. "Perhaps she is a widow; but somehow," he added, laughing, "she is not a person you connect naturally with the matrimonial idea. You do not think of wondering about her being married in any past, present, or future when you are talking to her; you think of quite different things. But—you shall see her."

"I do not half like to go," said Piers remonstrating. "You know I hate new sorts of people, Vic."

“No, you do not: you have had no end of new people to know lately, and you have not hated them a bit. At all events, you will not hate Madame Prioleau, I’ll answer for it, or old Madame d’Alnigni either. Oh yes, you will go. I will send a line to Faustine.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“Time from her form had ta'en away but little of its grace ;
His touch of thought had dignified the beauty of her face.”

THOMAS BAYLEY.

FAUSTINE'S persuasions, combined with Victor's, overcame Piers's shyness and disinclination for more new acquaintances, and six o'clock the next evening found the two friends standing together under the archway of the Conciergerie of No. — Place Vendôme.

The curious circle of Parisian society in which the circumstances of his friendship with Victor, and his sympathy with his political views, had conducted Piers, left him at the end of several months' sojourn in Paris still quite in ignorance of society in the ordinary acceptation of the term, or of the inner and private life of any Parisian families of position or rank. The Place St. Etienne had constituted his world.

Madame d'Alnigni, a Frenchwoman and the widow of an Italian noble of some distinction,

belonged to this higher and more conventional circle of society into which Piers had never sought to penetrate. Her fancy for her two young *protégés* of the Grand St. Marteau had been an instance of a vein in her character for which she was distinguished among her aristocratic friends.

She appreciated talent, she admired beauty and, above all things, *originality* wherever it could be found. Faustine's dark picturesque face had captivated her years ago, when the girl was still a wild passionate-hearted child, and Madame d'Alnigni had expended much time and energy in the effort to win the young heart to herself. She had won it to a warm gratitude for many kindnesses done—many graceful compliments shown to herself and her grandfather.

And in the old days at the Grand St. Marteau, Faustine had yielded a certain homage and obedience to madame's exacting devotion. Then they had travelled together, and, as Victor said, quarrelled hotly and with hopeless persistency, and Faustine had declared her own temper far too bad to live with any one but her gentle old grandfather; and she had come back to him.

Then in the early days of long ago, before even Faustine had attracted Madame d'Alnigni's

attention, Victor's mother had been her friend, and her interest in the sunny bright-eyed boy had been always keen.

He had had a chivalrous love from his earliest boyhood for the old lady, and never failed when circumstances threw them together to visit her and pay her affectionate deference.

Madame d'Alnigni's pretty little apartment was on the second floor in a large mansion at the left-hand corner of the Place Vendôme. There was a government office on the *rez-de-chausée*, and in consequence a tall and imposing gendarme stood immovable at each side the archway, and constituted the pride of Madame d'Alnigni's life.

Up the broad stone staircase Victor preceded Piers, beyond the first floor to the second, where the door was held open in waiting for them, and they passed into the pretty little octagon hall.

A refined taste was apparent everywhere—in the rich but chastely toned panelling of the walls, in the few pictures let into the dark wood, in the pieces of beautiful oak furniture Piers observed quickly, as they stood a moment, and the servant took possession of their overcoats.

It was a beautiful little hall. A rich Indian carpet covered the middle of the floor, a parquet

of coloured wood showing round each side. A soft globe-lamp hung in the arched centre of the ceiling, and rich velvet curtains covered the entrance of each door.

“Par ici, messieurs,” said the servant; and he raised one of the curtains, and softly opened a door—“par ici.”

They followed him, first through an ante-room, and then into one of those charming little apartments, of which the first glance reveals the taste and understanding of its inhabitants.

“Mon cher Victor!”

Two ladies sat, one on each side of the fire, and with this exclamation the elder rose, and clasped Victor’s extended hands in her own.

She was a handsome striking old lady, with snowy curls, *frisées* and *coiffées*, clustering round her smooth temples. She had dark sparkling eyes, well-formed and decisive features, a kind glance, and a brilliant smile.

“Ah, you have come—I am so glad. And this is your friend?”

“Yes, madame,” said Victor, when he had bent over her little jewelled hands and raised them to his lips—“yes: permit me to introduce him. Mr. Ashton—Madame La Comtesse d’Alnigni.”

Piers imitated the deferential salutation of a well-bred Frenchman, with which he was growing familiar, and bowed solemnly and low ; and Madame d'Alnigni made him a profound curtsy in answer. Then she looked up and smiled, her eyes sparkling merrily, and she held out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said in very broken English. "That is the way, is it not? I am glad you to be known to me. How do you do?"

And Piers had to take the pretty old hand and kiss it, as Victor had done.

"He is getting on," said Victor laughing, as Piers raised his head again with the colour spreading over his handsome face.

"And Madame Prioleau! Ah, we meet once more: how pleasant!"

And Victor turned from Madame d'Alnigni and Piers to the second lady, who sat still by the fire.

Piers's eyes followed him, and his interest was immediately aroused. It was such a refined and charming face, that looked up to answer Victor's greeting, and lit up with the intense sweetness of a smile on a countenance where smiles may be rare.

It was a pale face, once evidently handsome, but

now somewhat worn. It was a sensitive, tender face, with a wonderful look in it of full self-possession and courageous calm. There was a sort of satisfying completeness in the whole countenance, from the sweet look in the dark-grey eyes to the firm kindness of the mouth; there was a harmony on which the eyes rested with a sense of repose and contentment it was difficult to define.

She extended to Victor a hand in which there was as much character and expression as in her face—a hand that could be firm and courageous, that could touch with the infinite gentleness that belongs to strength.

“Madame Prioleau!” Victor held her hand a moment, and looked into her face with the earnest sweetness in his smile, that spoke a past with its memories lying between them.

But she was much older than Victor: that Piers saw at a glance. There was no romance or sentiment in their friendship, it was evident. Her eyes rested on his fair young face with a glance kind and motherly, full of questioning, full of concern; and he looked down at her with the grave look in his eyes that mingled so often with the sweet smile on his lips. A gaze of assurance, reverent and expressive, it seemed to lay his life, his spirit, his career before her, and to ask her

approval, to invite unflinchingly her most critical gaze.

“Dear young friend!” she said, as his hand still held hers. “Ah me! how time flies! I left a curly-locked schoolboy: I come back to find him moustached, six feet high, and a distinguished man.”

“Not that yet, madame. But we try and hope.”

“Yes, already,” she answered. “I have heard of you far and near—the French Wrangler of the year ’66. We have all been proud of you, who had anything to do with your education in old days; have we not, madame?” she continued again, smiling as she turned to her hostess.

“Very, very!” exclaimed old Madame d’Alnigni—“very proud; and your friend, too,” she continued, looking admiringly at Piers’s broad-shouldered English figure. “Do let me present you. Monsieur Ashton—Madame Prioleau.”

And Piers bowed again as the pale kind face was raised towards him with a look of scrutiny in the grey eyes.

“Where is Faustine?” cried Madame d’Alnigni.

“Oh, she is coming,” said Victor. “We live in different parts of Paris, you know, madame; and I could not go and fetch her, to bring her here, as we used to do in the old St. Marteau

days, because I was at a meeting in the Rue St. Pélagie all the afternoon."

"Ah, Victor, Victor, at your mischief!—at your mischief as ever!" said the old lady, shaking her finger at him.

"No, not mischief, I hope: trying to prevent it rather, if I had the power."

"I have a great deal to hear," said Madame Prioleau. "You have been doing so much all these years. I have a great deal to hear, Victor."

"And you shall hear it," he said; "but what we have been doing, it is difficult to describe. Not much, I fear. What we have been saying would take a long time to report. There is a great deal said, in these days, madame; there is not much done."

"Doing springs often of saying," she said.

"Yes; but the sayings of these present times do not promise much for the value of their results in deeds. Ah, madame, you are to be envied; your life is all doing; no waste of energy in idle words in your career."

"I have had a busy time, indeed, since I saw you last," she answered. "I have just come back from America now. I went across after the war to see my own people. They took a notion to be

anxious about me just then, and I went over to show them all that I was still comfortably in the flesh."

"And now," he asked, "what is your present project?"

"I am going to take superintendence of the Empress's Hospice des Incurables here for a time," she said: "I received an application to do so while I was still in New York. I shall remain until I have done all they require of me, and then I wish to go for a time to England. I have many kind friends there; and there are institutions and undertakings I wish very much to visit."

"Ah, England! You will enjoy a sojourn there," said Victor. And just then the door was opened again, the curtain thrown back, and Faustine swept into the room.

Madame d'Alnigni rushed at her, and clasped her with fervour in her arms.

"*Ma belle ! ma bien aimée !*" she exclaimed, as she kissed Faustine's blooming cheek. "You are more lovely than ever, my treasure; is she not, Madame Prioleau, is she not?"

Faustine laughed, and disengaged herself from the old lady's embrace, and exchanged a warm greeting with Madame Prioleau.

“Do you not find her beautiful?” said Madame d’Alnigni again, turning impetuously to Piers.

He coloured suddenly and smiled.

“Who could find her otherwise?” he answered; and Faustine turned to the old lady with impatient vexation.

“Dear madame,” she said, “do not talk nonsense, and entrap unsuspecting Englishmen into belying their nationality. An Englishman never flatters.”

“I do not flatter now,” said Piers. “If I am asked a question, Mademoiselle Faustine, I must answer with truth.”

“Good, good,” said the old lady. “And it is true, Faustine, *ma chère*; you are more than ever like a damask rose.”

“Bah!” said Faustine. “Dear friend, you see with the colouring of your own kind eyes.”

“No, no. Ah, here is M. Regnau. Come, we will ask him,” she exclaimed again as the door was opened, and M. Raoul Regnau was announced. But Faustine turned now and silenced the old lady with a grave appealing glance; and her answer to Raoul Regnau’s greeting was cold and imperious enough to show even Madame d’Alnigni that such badinage would be out of place, now he had appeared on the scene.

Raoul Regnau was well dressed, well scented, well curled, as usual, with his diamond ring flashing on his finger, as he raised his hand continually to his black moustache. Somehow that ring, the white taper fingers, the jet-black curling hair, and the row of shining white teeth between his red lips were always points of strong contrast that caught the attention whenever Raoul Regnau was seen ; and these dwelt in the memory, in the sense of the impression he made.

Madame Prioleau greeted him coldly ; Madame d'Alnigni with courteous ceremony. He belonged, more than any others of the party, to the social circles that were naturally hers. Victor and he exchanged salutations of studied politeness, and Piers's forehead clouded as he bowed his distant "good evening," and saw Raoul fling himself with careless grace into a chair by Faustine's side.

Old Dax was not coming this evening: the little party was made up. Presently dinner was announced ; a door on the inner side of the room was thrown open, folding back in two double leaves ; and a tall black servant, solemn, silent, and deferential, stood waiting on each side. Those ebony attendants were becoming a fashion in Paris in these latter days of the Empire, so

Madame d'Alnigni was sure to have them : simple and kind-hearted as she was in many ways fashion was her sovereign law.

The little dining-room appeared beyond the purple *portière*, as they raised and held it back ; a beautiful little circular apartment, from whence the light came in soft glistening radiance, streaming into the shadowy fire-glow and twilight in which Madame d'Alnigni chose to receive her guests.

Piers was elected to conduct the old lady, as the stranger of the evening. Victor was made happy by the command to take in Madame Prioleau, his beloved friend ; and Raoul and Faustine fell to each other.

It was a charming little dinner. Old Madame d'Alnigni knew how to entertain her friends. The dining-room, just bright enough for cheerfulness, with lights just sufficiently softened to prevent a glare, was a picture in itself ; panelled with pollard oak, like the vestibule, its sombre tone was again relieved by a few beautiful pictures let into the wall—a Poussin, a Watteau, some Dutch fruit-pieces by Sneider, some sweet little “interiors” by Teniers, and on each side of each picture a tiny statuette held the pendant globes of soft light. The table was covered with

fruit and flowers ; the dinner was brought noiselessly round by the black servants and their attendant satellites, and conversation flowed easily in the little circle without any interruption.

“I like the English—I love the English !” said Madame d’Alnigni to Piers. “You must often come to see me.”

“I shall be charmed, madame ; you are most kind.”

“Yes, I love the English. I like the poetry of England ; above all, *Beeron* and *Shelley*. He is, both of them, divine.”

“And yet they are not our greatest,” Piers answered.

“Ah ! Shakspeer ; yes, but I do not love him so much. In drama, I like Frenchmen best ; not Racine, no—stiff and cold ; nor yet Corneille. I like Molière, to make me laugh when I have a *migraine* ; and I like Sardou of to-day. You love the play ?”

“I have not been to many yet,” said Piers.

“Not many ! What you do in your evenings ?”

“I go,” said Piers, glancing towards Faustine, who sat on his other side : “we have meetings, you know,” he said hesitatingly, “at the Place St. Etienne.”

“Ah, bah! You go listen to all that nonsense they talk?” said madame impetuously.

“Ah! dear madame,” interrupted Faustine, “I must not let you malign our Society to our latest convert.”

“Ah, bah!—nonsense!” cried madame, in an excited tone. “You will all get yourselves into mischief, I tell you, and burn the points of your fingers, if you do no worse. And good you will not do, to yourselves or to any one at all,—*allez!*”

“Madame d’Alnigni gives us wise counsel of moderation,” said Raoul, drawing his napkin slowly across his black moustache.

“I give you counsel,” said madame, glancing cautiously towards her servants, “to let all such *bêtise* and scheming alone. I have seen enough of it, my children, in my day. I have had a little to do with these things.”

“And,” said Faustine emphatically, “by these things, as you have known them, Italy is free!”

“Ah!” sighed the old lady, “let us not talk of it. Here, Victor, what are you and Madame discussing so gravely? Try a glass of this Veuve Cliquot, madame; it will do you good. Monsieur Regnau, what do you think of my château Lafitte?”

“Excellent,” said Raoul, raising the purple wine to his lips; “it does credit, madame, to a lady’s cellar.”

“Your health, *chère* madame,” said Victor brightly, as he raised his glass in his turn; “your health, and many a pleasant meeting for us all in the future.”

“*Grazie*, dear child,” she answered, nodding her white curls, and smiling on him with a softer sparkle in her dark eye; “if we do not meet often, it will be your fault, I fancy. I am more likely to be stationary than you are, mon Victor; your journeys will be wider and longer than mine.”

“Talking of travels,” interrupted Raoul, “I have a word to say to you, Lescar, this evening. With madame’s permission, I refer to it now. Would you like to travel awhile? The opportunity for some one of us will offer soon.”

Faustine’s eyes glistened eagerly as Raoul looked round at her, and questioned her face as he spoke. One of them were to go, he had said: which would *she* choose to have sent forth?—which to remain? Her dark eyes met his for a moment, then they wandered to Victor’s face.

“You mean,” said Victor, becoming grave,

the bright smile with which he had greeted old Madame d'Alnigni fading instantly—"you mean the 'mission of visitation,' as Bouchet and Rochecarre put it with so much grandiloquence?"

"Yes," exclaimed Raoul, "the visitation of all the centres of the 'Universal' at home and abroad; an important mission. Who is worthy to go? I, for one, humbly repudiate my fitness; but you—?"

"There is important work to be done in Paris at present," Victor answered, his face clouding more and more. "But," he added, rousing himself, "why should we discuss it now? Pardon us, dear madame. How did the conversation turn on such serious themes? Let us change it. Madame Prioleau, you were telling me of your American campaign."

Madame Prioleau answered him, and they fell into their separate conversation again. Raoul turned to Faustine.

"I go or stay,—as *you* ordain," he said. "Who is worthy? Both offices are important."

"*He* is worthy for either!" said Faustine defiantly. "If he goes, well: *we* will guard his interests here."

She uttered the word "*we*" not in confidential accents, suggesting a partisanship between her-

self and Regnau, but with dauntless defiance, and with the imperious dignity of acknowledged power. That "we" was a royal utterance, speaking individual, though united force.

Raoul turned away; and Piers watched both of them.

With a gaze, softened, wistful, and full of a strange anxiety, Faustine's eyes turned now on Victor's smiling face. Such a gaze as, Piers thought to himself, was worth a life or a death to win; and yet *he* could never win it, nor Raoul, nor any of them; it was only for him, who, all unconscious, all unresponsive, was bending his blue eyes and his sunny smiles on Madame Prioleau's grave kindly face.

Piers watched her, and, as he watched, a sort of unconscious wish, that was gaining strength within him, came over him, as it had often done of late—a curious wish that he could again see some one else, who he thought might look at *him* with eyes as kind as those now turned upon Victor—some one whose earnest spirit had often reflected his, whose glance, not fiery and passionate like Faustine's, but still full of expressive feeling, had often softened with wistful sympathy, brightened with tender joy, as it was raised to him.

This memory and this vague wish came often as he watched Faustine and Victor in these latter days. And yet he did not understand himself, and as little did he interpret, the trouble and anxiety that was hers.

Poor Faustine! She loved—she feared often for him she loved. She feared, as she loved—in silence.

CHAPTER XV.

“But he, sad, stood before the sun
 (The people felt their fate).
The world is many—I am one ;
 My great thought was too great ;
God’s fruit of justice ripens slow ;
Men’s souls are narrow—let them grow ;
 My brethren, we must wait.”

E. BARRETT BROWNING.

THAT dinner left many and pleasant memories, returning long afterwards with force, stronger than any impression it made at the time ; for, it was forgotten just then, in the crowd of events, important to every one of them, that came following closely on that evening.

Affairs in the “Universal” were becoming as entangled and as perplexing as they were widespread in their influences, and gigantic in their collective force. The “Universal” debaters of Paris were puzzled by contradictory and opposing views reaching the centre from every side.

The “Universal,” proposing unbroken union,

was becoming simply a vast crowd of struggling opinion—brethren in name, enemies in every thought of their minds. The descriptive principles of the Society—"Unity and Peace"—were being lost and forgotten; and Paris seemed a centre for numberless and conflicting streams.

It was this condition, when fully realised at the Parisian fountain-head, that suggested the necessity of a diplomatic mission to carry the message of the "Universal," from its assumed parent source in the Rue des Gravilliers, to every child of its creation, in whatever corner of the globe.

This mission was decided on. A few noisy councils were rapidly called; a few messages of mutual advice were exchanged, secretly, between the Rue des Gravilliers and Soho. The step was resolved upon; the proposition accepted: there remained for some days only the question of—the man.

Whose influence was brought most strongly to bear is uncertain. Whether Raoul Regnau's passionate jealousy decided that his purpose would be best served by Victor Lescar's absence, and his own presence, in Paris and at the Place St. Etienne, it is impossible to say: whether Bouchet found that Victor served his true aims but indifferently, and Jules Duplat realised that he

was a foe rather than a friend to his infamous schemes, all remains unknown. Influence works secretly, and with untraceable course, in societies and social conditions such as those of Paris at that date.

But, whatever influence decided the election, Victor was unanimously chosen, entrusted with the mission, and obliged, by the vows of his order, to undertake the journey whether it pleased him or not.

It did please him,—though he left Paris sore and sad of heart. It pleased him, to escape into freedom and a new vastness of life. He could do nothing to stem the poisoned currents of opinion in Paris; he might do something for the old dream, for the darling ideal of his soul, by visiting their distant brethren now.

He accepted without hesitation: he was to go.

Then came the gradual realisation of the different points at which this change in his future affected the career of his friends.

Faustine scarce knew if she were glad or heart-broken, that he should leave them. She would lose him again—her brother, her friend; nay, in the hidden secrets of her heart—*her love*. But he would be safe. She knew the power of bitter jealousy; she knew the evil tongues that spoke in

envy against him in Paris ; she knew the cruel eyes that watched him from every side ; she knew he was above them all in purity of motive, in unselfishness of devotion, in nobility of force ; and she knew they all hated him for this, though all seemed to obey. She knew that many who sought power for themselves, and glory for their own unworthy names, would willingly have crushed him from their path, and would, at all price, have him gone ; and she knew that there were men of their school who did not shrink from the secret dagger, the poisoned wine-cup, or the furtive pistol-shot, if it would serve their own low ends ; and she feared for him in Paris.

That dauntless front and open heart of Victor's was unfit, she felt bitterly, to cope with these double natures. His frank, outspoken confidence led him often in perilous ways. She was glad for him to go on this account ; and she sent him forth with courageous calmness and inspiring words. He would come again, she felt confident ; and the day of his power and his triumph glowed in the horizon of the future yet.

So she sent him from her ; and with him went Piers. What else was there for him to do ? Victor was going—his friend and comrade,—going hither and thither over the vast unexplored surface of

the world; of course Piers would go with him, unless, indeed, Faustine had smiled, and softened, and whispered "Stay,"—which she did not.

She would rather Victor was not alone in his journey; and when Piers had turned to her, she had commanded, "Go."

So they went, the two friends together, away—wide and distant, wandering far.

And the curtain drops over their life in Paris—as they left it; and a new act—with many new, fascinating, and bewitching scenes,—began for them, as they traced the scattered children of the "Universal" among the distant races, of the numberless countries of the earth. We will not follow their wanderings; we will not trace step by step the developing education of their minds, under the many new influences that crowded into their lives.

Only at one point—just after they left Paris—I arrest them, for one moment, to read the answering letter which followed them from the Hôtel Barreilles, and which Frederick Thessullson wrote when Piers's letter reached his hand. For many weeks and months it was their last message from home—from England.

CHAPTER XVI.

“For who, my friend, would trust the meteor blaze,
That soon must fail and leave the wanderer blind,
More dark and helpless far than if it ne’er had shined?”

“MY DEAR ASHTON,” Frederick wrote,—“Your letter, which I have just received, gives me an evening of fresh thought, and an apology for a variety in the routine of my occupations, which is pleasant and invigorating; for this I am grateful to you. I have read your letter, and re-read it. I have, I think, understood its inference; I have endeavoured to enter with sympathy into the phase of mind which it describes. Can anything be more contrasted—I ask myself with curious interest—than the results in our two characters of the same external education, the same associates, the same apparent conditions of life? How practically, how actively, how urgently, the duties of a man have forced themselves upon my mind; how abstract, how undefined, their nature still appears as they present themselves to you!

“*I* have grasped the thought, and it is imprinted indelibly on my mind, that—the practical belongs to this life—the ideal, to that which is to come. To me, *work* is the watchword of earth, *vision* is reflection from heaven: exertion is here; contemplation speaks of hereafter. But, doubtless, I am an uninterestingly practical man! I cannot see anything higher in this world’s history, achieved in the past, or possible in the future, than active sacrifice of whatever one is—oneself. I cannot see any ideal that, to my mind, promises any result that will emancipate us from self-sacrifice, or raise our fellow-creatures above requiring it from us. I cannot, I confess to you, follow any theory that points to a consummation more sublime than ministry of body, mind, money, and time to those sufferers who crowd our cities, and the fact of whose necessities no re-organization of society can ever remove.

“Active exertion and successful accomplishment are to me the highest realization of my highest ideal. For a fuller purity of perfection I look beyond the earthly horizon, and I cannot see it any nearer than there.

“But do not conceive, though I express all this as my own feeling, that I would depreciate the poetic, ideal, or even visionary sphere

of the human mind. I am, on the contrary, ready to confess that these spheres may be far above me, and therefore beyond my comprehension.

“The word which seems to have taken most root in your views of life, and which seems to be the key-note of your theories and principles, is the word ‘Ideal.’ I try to grasp its inference, and present it to my own mind; I try to catch a gleam of insight into the thought it conveys to you.

“The ‘Ideal’ is a word that comes to me with an echo from my boyish days — a word that captivated the fancy in those times, carrying a meaning indefinite but full of charm. The ‘Ideal,’ in that translation of its inference, means the mystic sphere to which the mind was swung by the power of music, beauty, poetry, art. It was the only name we ever found descriptive of that range of delightful and dreamy thought that streamed through the soul as we read ‘Sintram’ and ‘Childe Harold,’ listened to Handel or Schumann, wandered through the galleries of the Louvre or Dresden, heard Malibran sing, or saw Talma act,—the earliest memories, all these, of boyish wandering days. Poetry had existence within the heart in the full flush of youth and enthusiasm; the

spirit tasted a mysterious sweetness, we called it the 'Ideal.'

"There is something of the ring of this inference of the 'Ideal' in the pages you have written to me. You have awakened, later than most men, to that sense in which we are all more or less subjective creatures. You have sounded only now the strength of appreciative sympathy within yourself.

"Thus far the 'Ideal' softens and gives beauty to a character—bathes the heart in a tenderness that never wholly leaves it, gives the sympathies existence, gives the man new life. Thus far a love of the 'Ideal' is a faculty without which the character of men is crude, rough, and almost necessarily unpleasing. Thus far the ideal gives that poetry to a life, which Byron has described in his journal as 'the *feeling* of a former world and of a future one.' Thus far it is good. But—if a life is to be useful—this must stop at a certain point. The moment must come when the heart and testing judgment assert their requirements to be practical truth—truth that can be demonstrated as well as felt, truth that can be comprehended, truth that can be obeyed.

"The development of the subjective part

of our nature, in imagination or mind, should not satisfy any manly spirit, in artist, poet, or any other lover of the ideal. It *does* satisfy many; and so we have a school of writers such as those to whom you allude. Poets they call themselves, and the world endorses their opinion of themselves. Men of abstract, vague, incomprehensible language, whose reiteration of epithet seems nothing but the struggles of their subjective spirits to describe the vibrations of their own over-wrought sensibilities; to trace their own confused apprehension of what they *feel*.

“Do you remember my cousin, Henry Vere? He belongs to this school: poets of the ‘eyes of fine frenzy rolling,’ worshippers of their veiled goddess, as they express it—the undefinable ‘Ideal.’

“There is another phase of ideal-worship, however, and I see more evidence still of that phase in you. There is the ‘Ideal’ with form. The mystic conception has, for you, a visionary shape. Your dreams have a language of their own and a name—

“‘The pilgrim of eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like heaven bent.’

“I used to think of these lines often, when

Victor spoke to me in those old Cambridge days, and described the theories of your 'Ideal,' in its pure and unearthly beauty. I saw his enthusiasm, I appreciated his power; I realised fully that he *had* embraced his 'Ideal,' till it had become to him a reality; and I foresaw that it would be in heaven, not on this failing faltering earth, that he, or any dreamers like him, would see their dreams realised.

“There is no absolute perfection of type on earth, and there never will be—in government, in social organization, in any other condition of things. The absolutely perfect exists in the Divine idea only; the gradual comprehension thereof is the utmost in the regions of the ideal that man can hope to attain. But *you* dream of an absolute perfection; you aspire towards a realisation of conditions possible only in the full accomplishment of Divine will and intention as regards our race. You contemplate in your day (perhaps through your agency) development, complete fulfilment of the destinies of humanity. These destinies, which infer suffering; this completeness, which describes Divine triumph; this accomplishment, which presupposes nothing less than a fulfilment of all Divine intention in the discipline of man.

“ My dear friend, I fear less for you the influence of your visions, enervating and paralyzing to active energy as it must be, than I fear your future—when it leaves you. I fear for you, with strong anxiety, the day which must come, when your ‘Ideal’ will take wings and float away; when the mystic veil of the indefinite will be torn from it, and it appears to you in all its unreality, its unpractical inefficacy, its impossibility, its failure. I do not wish to foretell the saddening hour; I do not wish to dispel the beauty of your visions, vague, incomprehensible, as they are. I do not question their beauty; I admit it. I do not question their sublimity; I acknowledge them the shadow of a great truth, that is most heavenly and divine. What I wish to say is this: if that day comes, and you are far away and solitary perhaps, and friendly comfort and counsel is distant from you, remember,—*that* is the hour for which I write this letter; for that is the hour of danger which I see threatening you somewhere in the distance of time. *Désillusionné*; the darkest, the saddest, the bitterest condition of the human soul! and yet—the inevitable ultimate of a thinker, be he philanthropist, poet, or politician, who does not base his theory upon positive truth.

“ I have seen many such, and have read of more.

I have traced the frame of mind depicted under every figure of poetic imagery, in the writings of the favourite idealist of your French school, George Sand, in her '*Lettres d'un Voyageur*;' read them,—she traces slowly the phantom and dispels the delusions of many a young visionary mind;—in the '*Faust*' of the German Goethe, in the '*Manfred*' of our Byron, in the misanthropical Timon; so in many other writers.

“It is in the words of that same great, faulty idealistic French writer that I would ask you to remember that ‘truth lives ever, and, if visions leave you, remains still unchanged, the foundation on which to rebuild your life.’

“If the days come, when, as she says, you must cast behind you those phantoms of glory and enjoyment, when the conviction grows that they are but vapours illumined by the sun-rays for a moment, and destined to pass into darkness and gloom, then remember what she still says. She is the great prophetess of your school, and some of her words are diamonds worthy to be set for ever in settings of purest gold. ‘There is but one reality in our human life—duty, mournful but sacred as the stars; as all lovely things.’ And again, ‘There is but one sole virtue in this world; it is the simple sacrifice of self.’

“I shall often think of you as you pursue your ‘Ideal.’ I shall watch its development as far as the public can trace it. I shall watch for you, if reality should ever be asserted, and your ‘Ideal’ die. If it lives, the millennium is coming for all of us; if it die,—I will watch for you.

“Yours,

“F. T.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ With accents blithe as voice of May
Chanting glad Nature’s roundelay,
Circled by joy like planet bright,
That smiles ’mid wreathes of dewy light,
Thine image such in that glad time,
When thou, just entering on thy prime,
And woman’s sense in thee combined
Gently with childhood’s simplest mind.”

JOHN WILSON.

LADY CURZON KELLAM had her way at last.

In the winter of 1870 the snow was heavy and the frost hard all over the north of Scotland ; and when the time drew near that Sir John Graeme had to leave the Old Towers and return to his official duties in London, the state of the climate operated to assist the influence of Lady Curzon’s urgent letters, and resulted in his final decision that his two girls should accompany him.

In these days, when railway transit is so easy, and whole families are conveyed in huge family carriages backwards and forwards with so much

facility, in autumn or spring, from King's Cross to the northernmost point of the Highland line, it is a rare thing to light here and there in a corner upon a pair of sisters at all resembling Donna and Gaie Graeme—girls whose daily interests were still concentrated in the surroundings of their own picturesque home,—whose range of experience, except through the medium of books, was limited to the circle of their associations there.

Such a training is apt to produce in commonplace minds a very narrow and circumscribed development of character. But—in higher types of mind, allowing that, at some periods during education, influence awakening and directive has been brought forcibly to bear, it produces often characters in which all the faculties of thought are developed to a degree of refined perfection exceedingly rare in these days of hurry in education as in everything else,—of cramming as regards quantity, and of indifference as to the actual quality of what is imbibed.

If the young mind is in deed, as in allegory we often call it, a garden intended to be sown and watered and enriched until it blossoms and matures to intellectual fruit, then surely the fault in education of the present day is just the

want of that particular process in mental development for which Donna and Gaie Graeme had perhaps too much opportunity, while so many of their contemporaries were having none: leisure for the germination of thought; space for the growth of reflection; time for the mental tranquillity in which alone, it appears to philosophic observation, a young mind can assume any originality, or form an individual character.

From the year that Donna attained the age of seventeen, was set free from all school-room control, and was invited by her father and Lady Kellam to make her *début*, if she pleased, into the great social world, and had refused to do it, from that time till the present winter of '70,—when Gaie also arrived at the important presentation-year, and was aged eighteen,—Donna had not been disturbed by any further attack on the tranquil routine of her life.

Sir John had informed Lady Kellam he would not separate his daughters, and that Donna, with his approval, remained in Scotland until Gaie was old enough to come out.

It was not altogether good for her, this arrangement. If she had had the quick tender eye of a mother upon her through all these years, she would probably long ago have been wisely rooted

out of her old habits of study and seclusion, and roused up from her contented contemplation of the inner evolutions of her own mind.

It was quite time now ; and it was a good thing for the health and energy and nervous spring of all Donna's future intellectual capacities, that Gaie grew up just at that happy moment and evinced herself full of buoyant vigorous anticipation of a real entrance into life. Donna acquiesced, now that Gaie wished it ; and one stormy day in early February they started, mid frost and snow, from the Old Towers, and made the long, wintry journey to London.

Sir John had bought a house lately, as far as possible, as he had said, from the fog and smoke of the East End, with as much of the semblance of country, in front and behind, as he could procure for his "country-loving" girls within reasonable distance from what—according to his own idea—constituted London.

Lady Kellam helped him, as she always did in family matters of difficult and practical detail ; and she discovered for him, and assisted him to procure, one of that short row of beautiful houses in the upper part of Prince's Gate, with the Park lying beneath the front drawing-room windows, and a large really beautiful garden under the

bow-window of Donna's pretty morning-room behind.

And there, by the beginning of February,—at which time Parliament opened, and Sir John made his excellent speech,—they were all comfortably settled, and Lady Kellam congratulated herself with supreme complacency, that the coming season would present a new excitement for her.

The two sisters must be presented at the first drawing-room ; but that would not be for some weeks to come. Meantime there was a great deal to do in superintending their wardrobes, in bringing about certain introductions and desirable acquaintances among such people of her “ set ” as were already in town.

Lady Kellam had been paving the way for her nieces for some time past, and she was pleased to think that there was sufficient ground to anticipate, under her distinguished and skilful chaperonage, triumphs—social first, ultimately matrimonial—for both girls.

She received a slight shock, during her first conversation with them, as they sat by the fire in the morning-room at Prince's Gate ; in the pretty apartment with the wide bow-window, which Sir John had especially consecrated to his girls.

Lady Kellam had had the sole charge (Sir John had gladly resigned it to her) of all the furnishing, painting, and hanging department; and she had come to town, she assured the girls, in the horrid dead time of the year, at the heroic sacrifice of a whole round of country visits, and had spent hours, indeed whole weary days, in choosing and deciding and superintending the fittings of their Prince's Gate mansion from the basement to the roof.

She liked doing it; it was the exercise of a piece of patronage and power; and power, patronage, and success (according to her own view of it) was to Lady Kellam the cherished *fetish* of her soul. She was determined "poor John" should have "a decent house" in which to bring out his daughters. He signed the cheques; she took the trouble. The result did her credit; but the gratitude she demanded in return for the self-assumed task was unlimited and rather perplexing.

I forbear to describe their rooms; they were, *in toto*, a pleasing and well-chosen combination of colour and shade. Panelled frescoes and softly tinted walls, aubusson carpeting, warm and yielding to the pressure of the foot. Portières of dusky velvet separated room from room;

turquoise hangings veiled the windows ; and in the morning-room, a pretty flowery *crétonne*, (the same as every one else had at that moment,) covered the low sofas and lounging-chairs.

Gaie vowed she had never seen anything so perfectly lovely ; and Lady Kellam assured her, with smiling complacency, it was not more than their father's position required. The only thing to be said was, as she added with a toss of her head, " he ought to have done it long ago."

Gaie did not care for this : it was quite enough for her that he had done it now ; and she ran about and clapped her hands ; and showed her row of little ivory teeth in radiant delight and childish enjoyment, as she peeped under every cover, held up the edges of the embroidered curtains, counted the birds' nests on the *crétonne*, and called Donna to admire the lovely Watteau groups on the French tapestry that adorned, in the large drawing-room, the panelled walls.

Donna thought it lovely, too, and with her cultivated taste she enjoyed, with a keen though only half-conscious realisation, all this perfection of refined beauty with which their father had surrounded them in their new London home.

Gaie's sensation, in the midst of so much novelty,

was one of simple unalloyed enjoyment and expectation. She seemed transported, in the course of that one railway journey, into a fairy palace of beauty and delight; and her life seemed to lie before her in a mystic cloud-land of infinite and delicious possibilities, to which she could give neither form nor name.

Her life had been always healthful and buoyant, full of quick capacities, always gay, and easily excited to exuberance of hilarity and childish joy. It was a delightful thing to make Gaie happy, or to make her "happier than happy," as she always expressed it; for radiant and unclouded happiness was her normal state, and the simple delight with which she accepted a new pleasure was a picture one looked at with a thrill of softened admiration, such as we feel now and then as we bend over a beautiful flower—as the tears spring at some chord of music, at the pictures of some painters, at the rhythm of some poets, or as the eye sinks into the soft radiance of a summer evening sky.

Gaie was singularly unsuspecting of life. She had never done anything but enjoy herself, sweetly, brightly, purely, in *existing*,—a piece of independent sunshine in her own individuality, and shedding sun-rays around. She was con-

fidant in life's promises to her; she was utterly incredulous of Donna's somewhat cynical view of things.

Lady Kellam was enchanted with Gaie, and she might well be. In all that coming season, it was impossible that any single flower would be produced, in all the gardens of Mayfair or Belgravia, to excel this briar-rose of hers, fresh from its wild northern home.

The rippling gold of Gaie's hair shone with a bewitching lustre: there was no respect in which a coiffeur's skill *could* enhance its wave, or its glistening shade.

"I so feared," Lady Curzon Kellam had said, as she passed her white fingers over the girl's fair head—"I so feared we should have had Scotch *red* coming out as you grew older, Gaie. Your father's sister had it, I recollected with concern; and the fashion for that pre-Raphaelite sort of hard colouring is quite gone by. It became *too* common last season. But you are perfect,—a little more to the light, dearest;—yes, it is the regular burnished gold Leighton has been wild about for the last twelvemonth. He or Millais are sure to want to take your portrait; let me see, as what? Enid, no doubt, or Elaine. And your eyes,—did you pluck them as two violets,

child, by the lake-side in your wilds up there? They are quite lovely!"

And Lady Kellam, as she held her teacup in one hand, turned Gaie's sunny face, by two fingers pressed gently on her cheek, towards the soft lamp-light streaming from the centre table.

It was February, and the evenings closed in early still. Lady Kellam had come to drink tea with her two protégées, just that she might observe a little how they could receive.

The simple, well-bred grace, that expressed instinctive hospitality, left her little to say. Gaie knelt on the rug before her, and Donna sat in a low chair on the other side.

Lady Kellam was particularly delighted with Gaie, and it seemed as though she could not say enough to convey to the girl's young and astonished mind her thorough appreciation and approval of the soft, shelly tints of her complexion, her delicate little ears, her small curved chin, and the dark eyebrows and long jetty lashes that were such uncommon contrasts and relief of colouring to the fair hair and skin, and, above all, the expression,—sweet and varied beyond even Lady Kellam's powers of appreciation,—of the blue eyes, that were, indeed, like two violets quivering beneath the weight of a glistening rain-drop that

gave brightness and depth to the reflection of each. The quick, varying expression, from unclouded radiance to a curious shadow of uncomprehended thought, that came rapid as the changeful flash into Gaie's eyes, and were their greatest charm, was quite without interpretation by any dogmas of Lady Kellam's philosophy. That wistful expression, like the young deer's as it pauses suddenly in its mad glorious bound over the heather, and turns on you with a wondering and half-startled gaze, was the one thing in Gaie's face that raised it above the common type of fresh, fair-haired, and blue-eyed beauty,—that hinted a deeper under-current streaming somewhere in the merry heart, and seemed to cast a wistful interest across her future. But for these two rain-drops and that quick unread shadow in the eyes, I scarcely think I should have cared to trace her character further.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“I see her upon nearer view—
A mind—and yet a woman too;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet.”

WORDSWORTH.

IT was on that very first afternoon, that Lady Kellam received a little shock about the sisters—about one of them, at least. All the time while she was contemplating Gaie's fair countenance, Donna was sitting silent on the other side. She sat with her hands resting upon her knees, her slim, delicate fingers twined tightly together, her grey eyes fixed upon the large, glowing fire, and answering back its warm reflection in a thoughtful, light from their shaded depths.

Donna was indulging in a very bad habit of hers, that had grown upon her very strongly of late. She was almost unconscious of Lady

Kellam's presence—she scarcely heard any of the profound social wisdom that that lady propounded ; for the whole time she was speaking, Donna's thoughts were wandering away into familiar, favourite grooves of their own, and, moreover, into vast undiscovered lands, of which their arrival in London gave her a new, delightful prospect.

Lady Kellam's idea of the world that implied "London" was very orthodox and commonplace, —very easily conceived.

Donna's mental associations with the name London, on the other hand, were so unusual and so characteristic in kind, that it was no wonder their revelation on this afternoon gave Lady Kellam some little shock.

Donna had been cogitating over this sojourn in London all the way up in the railway carriage, during those long bits of silence through which people sit together in the course of a lengthy journey, and in which more philosophic, retrospective, and prospective reflection is achieved, I do think, than in any other time in these hurried lives of ours.

Donna was continuing these reflections now. "In London !" she was thinking ; "and not for a hurried visit of a few days, as they had sometimes

been before, but to sojourn, with time and leisure and opportunity to explore all sorts of delightful and undiscovered lands. London—the centre of national history in all ages of time. London—that embraced Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, the Tower, and St. Paul's. London—where Tyndal and Huxley were lecturing, and women invited and encouraged to come and listen and learn—where Carlyle was writing somewhere down in Chelsea. Ah, Chelsea!—a name fraught, too, with interest and artistic thought. Should she find traces of the old china factory, or the ruins of where it had once been? And Battersea was there, too, somewhere; she might trace the old enamel-workers, or, at all events, visit the haunts where they had dwelt. Chelsea suggested china and art, and old, quaint, interesting biography, to her mind. Whitehall and the “silver Thames” brought delicious vagaries of association, in which Raleigh and his velvet mantle flung on the river banks at the feet of the proud queen—the Stuarts with their gilded barge gliding in the summer sunlight to Hampton—Spenser singing sweetly of his darling river—all figured together in happy confusion in her mind as she felt herself in London—and Lady Kellam sat opposite her—reflecting on all the details

of costume necessary for their presentation at Court.

Donna had just arrived at recollecting that Johnson, too, had lived in London, and all the dear old people of his time—the time in which *she* had always wished to live. How often she had longed to know Mrs. Thrale, Frances Burney, —and, she had just been wondering whether she could find Exeter Street, and whether people preserved and exhibited with classical interest the old garret there where Johnson discovered Oliver Goldsmith, with three halfpence and an empty platter by his side, a hungry void within his physical system, no prospect of a dinner anywhere, and the ink still wet on the last page of the “Vicar of Wakefield” on the table before him.

What fields for exploration! London teemed with interest on every side. At this point Lady Kellam’s voice arrested her.

“My dear Donna,” she said, “how you do sit mooning!—a shocking habit, my dear—very bad style. Nothing so ill-bred as to let your attention wander; nothing so offensive as to appear absent in the presence of a hostess or a guest. Listen—let me see—there is so much to be done, I scarcely know where to begin.”

“ Yes, there is such a quantity to be done, Aunt Kellam ; it is delightful, but really it is difficult to know where to begin.”

“ Let me see. What shall we do to-morrow ?”

“ Perhaps if we got a guide-book, aunt, it might help us to lay out a little plan.”

“ A what, child ? A guide-book—why, of course, I have the ‘ Court Guide ;’ and, yes, I dare say you had better have a copy. You will never remember where anybody lives at first. My dear Donna, do hold yourself up.”

Donna was bending in a favourite attitude, undoubtedly open to objection. Her hands were clasped round her knees now, and her eyes wandering away from her aunt’s face back towards the fire.

“ Look at me, my dear, when I speak to you. Yes, you had better have a ‘ Court Guide,’ though I do not know that the ‘ Royal Red-book ’ is not better. They have certainly ferreted out every corner of London ; and really, what with Kensington and Bayswater, and all those new parts, there is no end to the out-of-the-way places people put themselves into in these days. Besides, you must have a ‘ Where is it ? ’ for a visiting address-book ; you will soon get into it all ; you will soon know every corner of habitable London. I will

take care of that. I dislike a want of common sense particularly, and that stupid ignorance girls affect nowadays.

“ Ah, but London is so vast,” said Donna. “ It is dreadful to be so ignorant, but I feel it will take us some time. When shall we begin, aunt? To-morrow? Oh, do let us go to Westminster Abbey first! I do so want to see Edward the Confessor’s tomb.”

“ Westminster! My dear child, what an out-of-the-way idea. Yes, well; you ought to go there, certainly. But, bless me! poor John—your father I mean—he ought to have let you get through that school-girl sight-seeing years ago.”

“ Why, aunt, we could not have understood it then.”

“ Oh, nonsense, my dear! I know the Dean, however; and I should not wonder if he preaches next Sunday. I will write and get tickets for the private pews, and then I might take you down.”

“ But the tombs, aunt; we should not be able to see them all on a Sunday—not if a sermon was going on.

“ Oh, rubbish, my dear Donna! Thomas shall take you round afterwards, while I go to the carriage. It will not take you ten minutes, and we should get back in time for Lady Torrington’s

tea. She always receives on a Sunday, and her *réunions* are pleasant. I must take you. But what an odd child you are, Donna ! What put the idea of Westminster into your head ?”

“ Oh, aunt !” said Gaie, “ prepare yourself for many shocks of astonishment if you intend to explore all Donna has in that head of hers. It is something dreadful, I assure you.”

Lady Kellam looked uneasily across the fireplace at Donna’s thoughtful expression, but before she could speak Donna answered her question.

“ Oh, of course, if Westminster is not convenient, it does not the least matter. We need not begin with it. It is only one of so many places I want to see.”

“ My dear Donna, your time will be pretty fully occupied before very long, I assure you.”

“ Yes, I know it will. It will be quite difficult to do everything ; but it will be all so interesting, I know. There is the Tower we must go to, and the British Museum, almost first, because I want to find out about corals, and there are beautiful specimens there ; and then there is Kensington with all the Grecian casts and the Turner pictures ; and there is the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. I do not know that we had not better begin there.”

“My dear children!” exclaimed Lady Kellam, aghast; “when in the name of goodness do you expect to find time for such ridiculous explorations as these? Why, my dear, think what you have before you!—the drawing-room in March, a whole lot of early ‘at homes’ coming on before Easter, and neither you nor your sister have a single gown fit to put on. My dears, you have an immense deal to do.”

“I know I have,” said Donna. “Then there is Temple Bar, where Wat Tyler——”

“My darling child, what nonsense you are talking!” exclaimed Lady Kellam, with an irritability of tone that contrasted seriously with the caressing epithet. “Why, these are the sort of sights school children and the servants go to see when they have a holiday! I believe you will want to go to Madame Tussaud’s and the Polytechnic next!”

“There!—did I not tell you?” cried Gaie, with amused exultation. “Donna has all that in store for poor me, and I do not believe *I* want to see anything but the Crystal Palace, and the waterfall in the pantomime papa read about at Christmas-time.”

“And so you shall, my love, but not just now. The pantomime is over; besides, it is vulgar”

rubbish ; but in the season, when there is a flower-show, I'll drive you down to the Palace. There is sure to be a fête about July, and the Prince and Princess and all the world will be there. I will take you."

"Ah ! and I do want to see the Princess of Wales," said Gaie ; "and oh ! if I could only just *look* at the Queen !"

"You little, silly, lovely thing ! of course you will see her !" said Lady Kellam, patting the round cheek tenderly with her finger. "Why, you will see her when you are presented, and you will have to curtsey down low to the ground, Gaie, and kiss her Majesty's hand ; and I shall not be at all surprised if she compliments me on my pair of roses."

"Oh, of course—I forgot !" exclaimed Gaie. "What fun ! So—Aunt, is it not ? I wonder if I shall be dreadfully frightened ? Look here !—will this do ? Stop a moment, now—you are the Queen ;" and Gaie stood back a little, and then approached Lady Kellam with a profound curtsey—a slight caricature of the necessary degree of reverence, but full of natural grace. She raised the white hand, covered with its sparkling emeralds, and touched it lightly with her lips.

"Charming !" exclaimed her aunt ; and she

drew the girl close to her, and returned the embrace on her soft cheek. "But you must not laugh, my darling—there is the naughtiest quiver at the corners of those rosy lips of yours—you must be very solemn, you know, the whole time. You must practise with the train, however. I should not wonder if I had Madame Michau to give you just a few lessons, on the backing out of the royal circle. I am not afraid, however; you will do *ma mie*—you will do charmingly!"

"But, Aunt Kellam," began Donna again, "the drawing-room will not take the whole time—we have so many other things to do. I asked papa, and he promised to put down my name at the Albemarle Street Institution—he said he thought he could get me in. I *must* have time to go there, aunt. I have longed for it for two or three years back, and I have been looking forward so much to hearing Tyndal and Owen and Huxley speak. It must be so different from only reading their books."

"Tyndal!—Huxley! My dear, darling child, what can you mean? I hope to goodness, Donna, you are not a blue-stockings. Nothing—nothing do I consider such bad style as a girl setting up to be independent and original, with notions of that

kind. It will ruin your prospects," she continued solemnly. "You will break my heart, Donna, if you blight your success with such fancies. Put it all out of your head, my child, I entreat of you—really. Poor John—dear, dear—I must speak to your father."

"There! What did I tell you?" exclaimed Gaie, laughing. "Oh, aunt! it is hopeless. Donna has been a *Gentianella* (I will not have her called a blue-stocking) for years; and she could tell you astonishing things! Why she is regularly scientific!"

"Nonsense, Gaie, you do not know how ignorant I am. I know nothing," pleaded Donna.

"You are *cognizant*, as the old Strathallerby schoolmaster used to say, of certain very remarkable facts—that I maintain; but I dare say everybody else knows them, and it is only I who am an ignoramus. I wonder, now, Donna, if Aunt Kellam does know that—what is it?—we are all of us made of electrified atoms?"

"My beloved child!" expostulated Lady Kellam.

"Yes; let me see—I can say some of it in a sort of catechism—molecules. Aunt, we are made of molecules, and Donna knows all about it; but I declare I cannot get any further.

Where does the carbon and oxygen come in? Oh, Donna! I forget it all!"

"You are a hopeless pupil, Gaie," said Donna, laughing.

"Ah, I will ask papa—here he comes!" she exclaimed with delight, as the door opened, and Sir John appeared.

"Ah, Catherine! Ah, my birdies! Here you all are, snug and warm as possible; and it is abominably cold outside. Well, Catherine, are you giving these little awkward fledglings of mine their first lesson in the art of flying with grace?"

"Awkward, papa! Why, I have just made my presentation curtsey with such *exquisite* grace, that Aunt Kellam positively says I have nothing to learn, except—not to tumble backwards on my train."

Sir John drew a low chair to the fire, sat down, and Gaie turned her back on Aunt Kellam, and came and knelt close by him on the rug. He looked into the saucy face with an amused smile as he patted her cheek.

"Catherine," he said, "this is an upstart, impertinent monkey; you will have to keep her in great order, and if she gets too obstreperous for you, you must apply to me. I am a terrible martinet."

“Papa, how can you!” And Gaie’s eyes were opened very wide, and fixed reproachfully upon his face. “Never mind!” she added, nodding mischievously; “Aunt Kellam says I am going to be a great success.”

Sir John burst into a merry laugh.

“Yes, I am sure of it. I do not anticipate any trouble with Gaie,” said Lady Kellam with reserved asperity, as she glanced across the fireplace to where Donna sat. “She is young and pliable still, John; she can be moulded into all I should wish a niece of mine and,” she added, touching her cambric handkerchief lightly to her eyes, “a daughter of dear Adela’s to be.”

Sir John’s face clouded for an instant. He disliked these introductions of sentiment, too real and too painful to him, into the midst of light and thoughtless conversation; and Lady Kellam, as he knew by experience, was too fond of this sort of thing. The memory of “poor Adela,” whom he mourned sincerely, and whose place he had never sought to fill, was often used in argument against him as an irresistible weapon. He was silent a moment; then his smile brightened again as he still looked into Gaie’s face.

“Pliable, is she?” he said, laughing. “I never found it out; I am glad you have.”

Gaie's eyes as they met his were a curious blending of mischief and amusement. They said distinctly and with quizzical humour to her father, in language that he distinctly understood, "Aunt Curzon Kellam has known this grown-up Gaie just twenty-four hours."

"I am going to be a great success, papa," she repeated, nodding her head at him with solemn assurance.

"The dignity of the atom!" he exclaimed, laughing merrily again.

"Atom, atom!" Gaie cried. "Oh, papa! I am so glad you reminded me. I have been scandalizing Aunt Kellam with my ignorance. She vows, after all, on that score, I am not fit for polite society. Papa, do tell me, where does the oxygen come in, in all that about the atom?"

"Hulloa!" said Sir John. "What is all this? Do you go in for molecular science, Catherine? Ah! then you must look to Donna there. This poor neglected child knows nothing."

"Oh, papa!"

"'Play the spinnet and read nouvelles,' as her old aunts in the Towers fifty years ago, wrote in their diaries as their daily pursuits, that is all this May-flower can do. But she sings like a mavis

on a hawthorn-tree, Catherine ; so we will let off the molecules, I think."

"It is Gaie's fun, papa," said Donna gravely. "Aunt Kellam does not like science."

"Ho, ho !" said Sir John inquiringly again.

"My dear John, Donna has been treating me to a view of her intentions for the disposal of her time throughout this London season. Shocking, certainly, beyond words ; and *time*, that at her age has become so truly important and valuable."

Sir John laughed loud and long with provoking persistency, and Lady Kellam drew herself up at last with some dignity and disgust.

"John !"

"My dear Catherine, I beg your pardon ! But let me hear your complaint. Donna is not generally the rebellious bird. It is with Gaie I have always to do the wing-clipping process."

"Papa, you know," said Donna gravely again, "I had so many plans—places I want to see in London, and numbers and numbers of things I want to do—and——"

"Lectures, John—stuff and nonsense about Huxley and Tyndal, she has been talking to me."

"And there are all kinds of places—hospitals and

homes and institutions, you know, papa—that would help us so much to understand things at home. And you see, I am afraid, as aunt says, there will not be time for everything.”

“There, you hear, John! What is the use, I ask you, of your taking this handsome house, and turning the girls out as they ought to be, if Donna flies off with notions like that? Hopeless, John, hopeless!”

Sir John did not laugh now; he was looking away from Lady Kellam towards the slight, bending figure of his elder daughter—at the smooth, dark, shapely head, and the earnest young face bent towards the fire.

“Donna and drawing-rooms and gowns and flower shows and ball-rooms!” The combination seemed certainly perplexing to his mind. Yet his eyes were kind and tender as he looked at her.

Only he himself could tell *how* much, in companionship, in consolation, in the assistance and beautifying of his lonely home life, that young mind, with its bright intelligence and its quiet depth of clear-running thought, had been to him for the last ten years. How much he valued Donna, with all the sympathy and understanding that dwelt so richly in the cultured refinement of her mind, he only could tell; and he felt he

could only *express* it in the silent thankfulness of his heart, as his eyes rested on her now.

How well she had learnt to understand him ! how precious was her sympathy and intelligent companionship ! how little he felt he understood her !

The gradual paling of her young cheek had often grieved him, the gravity of the kindling eyes had given him many a throb of anxious pain, and it was in answer to this anxiety in his heart that he brought his daughters to London now, and determined to allow Lady Curzon Kellam exercise her ingenuity in the effort to make Donna a more commonplace girl.

It had begun to strike him lately that there was too much thought, too keen sensibility, too many hours of concentrated study in Donna's routine life to be good for the buoyant happiness he liked to consider an attribute of youth.

But Donna,—his precious little sage, his young fellow student, his pupil and companion in every subtle perplexity of scientific thought—certainly Lady Kellam, with her working-world notions, seemed strangely incongruous, now he had brought them together, with Donna or anything characteristic of her.

“Aunt Kellam,” he said presently to Donna, in a kind but quizzical tone, “Aunt Kellam does

not care about the great question of protoplasm—that is very hard, Donna, indeed, upon you and me.”

“My dear John——”

“Very hard, Catherine,” he went on, “because, you see, we have been and gone and delivered up our lives to you for this season, in a devoted bondage of body and mind, and we have all to do just what you tell us. And I find you are going to run counter to our favourite prejudices and our pet pursuits.”

“Well, I merely say,” replied Lady Kellam, pluming her much ruffled self, “that if Donna has gone back to the schoolroom, and means to stay there—well, it is useless *my* talking of taking her out, the two are not compatible.”

“They are not,” said Sir John. “And you have had a great deal of trouble for us, Aunt Kellam, and we owe you gratitude and obedience in return. So there is no help for it, my Donna. Huxley must work out that problem about the material origin without you or me, my love, if the Duchess of Underland chooses to give a *soirée dansante* on the night he speaks, for we are the bond slaves of Aunt Kellam, and to the Duchess of Underland’s you and I must go. Never mind, Catherine, do not be afraid for us, we will all be

good children ; and, Donna, you and I will console ourselves by looking forward to growing old."

"Then I will come and fetch the girls at half-past two to-morrow. Lunch early, John ; in these short days one must get out before three o'clock, and we can go to Elise about the dresses for the drawing-room, and to a drum at Lady Alloway's in the dusk of the afternoon. Good-bye. Ta-ta, Gaie, my precious darling ; this is a lovely rose of yours, John—I congratulate you. And, my dear Donna, good night. Kiss me, my love ; take my advice without delay—and, above everything in earth or heaven, my darling,—*do* avoid being—a bore !"

Lady Curzon Kellam drove away—along the Park towards her own house in the regions of Mayfair, and she thought with much complacency, notwithstanding Donna's strange eccentricities of mind, upon these young *protégées* of hers. Yes, they would do—undoubtedly they would do. Gaie was lovely beyond everything—she would create a *furor*. And Donna—she was very handsome in her own style, looked thoroughly distinguished and high-bred ; she had her own share of charms and attractions, and her contrast to Gaie was perfect to a degree. She had a queenly presence, and although she stooped in

that absent way in her thoughtful mood over the fire, she carried her small head right royally as she entered or walked down a room, and she had as much sweet dignity in her composed expression as any of those proud daughters of the Graemes, of whom Gainsborough and Reynolds had left the life-like portraits in the gallery at the Old Towers.

Lady Kellam thought all this, in her own way, as she drove along, and then her mind reverted to the future and to the precise course she should pursue. The *partis* of the season—who would they be?

She had always been popular with young men, and she had two or three, she thought, “ready in her pocket.” Ah! Gaie was barely eighteen, and the Earl of Harrenleigh’s eldest son just came of age last year. Well, he was to be thought of. Donna was five-and-twenty. Dear! much more difficult. How stupid of John to keep her mewed up till such an age. Ah! how lucky it was she, Lady Kellam, had always kept friends with that *dear* eccentric Sir Robert Carre, and he had forty thousand a year, was happily older (a good deal) than Donna, and was, strange to say, a bachelor still. He was called a *mauvais sujet* certainly; but the world was so ready to be censorious, and

unlucky mothers who had laid unsuccessful siege to him and that beautiful Castle Carreleigh, were only too glad to take the poor man's character away. Ah, well! it was a serious charge—these two dear girls, poor Adela's daughters; it would not be *her* fault if they were not both comfortably settled long before Goodwood that very year."

Then Lady Curzon Kellam, who attended Mr. Pratterly's crowded church every fine Sunday morning of her life, let a little piety into her reflections, and as the carriage stopped at her door, the words were formed on her lips, "But after all, in this life, how uncertain is *everything*! We make our schemes, and time destroys them; just as dear Lady Charlotte Eddingham said to me only to-day, 'L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.' "

So murmured Lady Curzon Kellam, but she did not realise *how* true it was!

CHAPTER XIX.

“The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill—
A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command,
And yet sweet-hearted, still, and bright,
With something of an angel's light.”

WORDSWORTH.

THAT evening, when Sir John came up from the dining-room, he found the two girls in close conclave sitting side by side in two low chairs on the crimson rug.

Donna was holding forth, and Gaie was listening with a sweet gravity in her large blue eyes, with a look of thoughtful interest, that spoke a depth in the sunny nature that had not been sounded by Lady Curzon Kellam.

I do not quite know what point of science or philosophy Donna was treating at that moment, but Gaie answered, just as Sir John entered the room—

“ Oh, Donna, what would I be without you?—just a flippant, useless thing.”

Sir John came across the room, and in between them on the rug, before the large blazing fire. He took up the poker, and plunged vigorously at the coals with a thoughtful look upon his face. He dug away at the fire as if driving at some tiresome perplexity, to which the physical exertion of energy gave relief.

To tell the truth, Sir John *was* perplexed. He was much too full of his two wild roses, as their aunt had called them, too ardent an admirer of both, all fresh and beautiful in their contrasted styles as they were—much too pleased with them to enjoy all this interference, this threatening of new doctrines and trainings for their young characters, by Lady Kellam.

He delighted so entirely in Donna, quaint, demure little philosopher as she was, and he hated the idea of trying to alter her. But he felt it must be done. He had been selfish, perhaps, he thought, as he looked at the pale dusky cheek; he had kept her all to himself; he had suffered her mind to develop too richly for her young fragile frame. He had enjoyed this sensitive and earnest companionship so much, probably he had drawn out the brain power and stimulated

the nervous system to a degree more highly-strung than was good for her.

Possibly Lady Kellam was practically right, so he set himself to perform the task of assisting her.

“What are you discoursing upon, Donna?” he said.

“Higher education of women,” said Gaie, answering promptly before her sister could speak.

Her father smiled.

“Which means—make an ant of a butterfly, eh, Gaie?”

She shook her head.

“People who are born butterflies must just be content to fly about in the summer sunshine, papa.”

“Ants carry the burdens of life, butterflies neglect them,” said Donna thoughtfully.

“And yet,” said her father, “the sunshine is good, and we could not do without our pretty-winged butterflies, could we, Donna?”

“You could not do without silly, useless Gaie, I know, if that is what you mean, papa,” said the younger girl, stooping forward as he stood near her, resting her chin upon her hands, and looking up with bright tenderness into his face.

He let his hand rest softly for a moment on the fair wavy hair before he answered her.

“My darlings,” he said, “I do not think that is a good way of looking at it—to cut up the duties of life between different people, and to appoint that one shall be always butterfly, another always ant. It is unfair to the butterfly to suppose her ever giddy and flying idly to and fro; it is bad for the ant that she is to be always labouring, with her eyes and footsteps bent upon the ground. To-day an industrious ant, to-morrow a butterfly enjoying brightness and sunshine and all the playful gladness of life—that is what I want to see you both, my children.”

“So I may not be always the butterfly? Ah me, papa!”

“And Donna has been an industrious hard-working little ant so long, she is going to let Aunt Kellam make a regular butterfly of her for the next six months to come. Dear me! when I think of my two giddy little girls by the end of the season!”

“You wish it, papa?” said Donna earnestly.

“I wish it, my love. You and I have done as much philosophical science and classical literature as is good for both of us. I want you, for some months to come, to enjoy yourselves, and to be as giddy and light-hearted as you can. And now go and sing, Gaie—I have half an hour still before

I go to the house ; and, Donna, give me a cup of tea.”

Gaie sang to him—sweetly, charmingly, her voice thrilling with a fresh, youthful ring in it—full of expression, full of sensitive musical feeling—sweet, as he had said to her aunt, as the spring song of the mavis in a flowering hawthorn-tree.

You understood something of where that changeful shadow in her eyes’ depth came from when you heard her sing. It was an intensely musical nature ; music was life to her, as sunshine to the flowers. And it was as yet *all* the expression of her inner self, of the deeper current that flowed under the rippling surface of her life’s stream. That look of absent, shadowy thought gleamed strongly from her eyes as she sang now, song after song, to her father ; and he drained his tea-cup, and then dropped quietly to sleep.

And Donna ?

Has Donna repelled you as a regular blue-stocking—a learned young woman of the day, who prates solemnly of higher education and molecular science, and talks “rose-water metaphysics” with the authoritative air of a German sage ? Was Donna, then, a genuine specimen of the modern blue, ready to pass a Cambridge

examination or take a degree—all impressed with the serious necessities of her sex in this life, desirous to study medicine, to lecture on philosophy, to write on social science, or to edit a leading journal on the rights of women and the higher faculties of their minds? Was Donna a genuine specimen of the “exceptional woman?” She could scarcely have answered this question herself. She had had but few associates who had had any powerful influence on her life. It had been moulded really by a single individual influence, and moulded with strong force. Time and leisure had been given for character to harden in its mould.

So it is; development of character may often spring from some little transient episode of intercourse between minds that “meet like ships at sea,” and pass on, each towards their different havens, affecting each other’s lives with a mutual influence of undying power.

There had been in Donna’s history an episode in which there had come to her a voice that had said to her repeatedly, during long summer days of their companionship, sentences such as these:

“The deplorable ignorance of women unfits them for important positions in life.”

“The education of women is of a nature so

frivolous, so aimless, and so unmethodical, that it is impossible that they can turn out anything but the useless and ignorant beings they are."

"A woman's argument is always valueless, because, from ignorance, its basis is always insufficient."

Donna was not a woman in those days, so that these valuable sentiments could be imparted as pieces of information to her without the idea of personal offence. But still they sank deep, for Donna was to become a woman. She was a subject for education; she must become one of those beings, hopelessly ignorant, deplorably useless, unless she made a strong effort to rescue herself from the obloquy of the threatening fate.

"A woman," as Sidney Smith called her, "a creature who never reasoned, and who could not poke the fire."

Donna came upon this sentence a year or two after that summer-time, and was amused to find her old friend's humiliating views of the mental faculties of her sex thus quaintly endorsed. She determined to be otherwise. She set to work, to study, and let old imaginations go to the winds.

She found study feasible, and in the gradual culture and development of her powers she gave

tacit denial even to herself to the old asseveration that a woman could not *learn*.

After a time her father helped her, as her opening intellect became a gradual delight to him. But all alone she achieved most of her study; and all alone she enjoyed the hidden glory as it shone for her from classic or scientific page.

She began the work, these years ago, from love of—she scarcely knew what. She continued it from the genuine love that sprang up for the pursuit of study for itself. As the taste for a new strange food grows by use thereof, and the experience of its satisfaction, so the delight in study grew upon Donna, with a curious, quiet enjoyment that was inexplicable to herself. She was undoubtedly a student—a blue-stocking, if you will; for she loved, with genuine devotion, books of old curious lore, difficult truths of science, subtle theories of philosophy; but, at the same time, I will not confidently assert, that, round each fact of Tyndal or Owen, round the songs of the Zoroastrians and the lyrics of Greece, round the doctrines of Plato and the reasoning of Aristophanes, there did not linger just a certain sweet aroma of memories, of association, by which she drew nearer in the depth of these studies to another thoughtful spirit, wandering and far away

from her now, than she could do in any other way.

Poor little Donna—sweet little learned woman ! The strongest thing in her deep nature was still as ever—her tender, though half-extinguished, woman's heart. Heart and mind, habits and tastes of long seclusion—she must bring them all to this new life now.

CHAPTER XX.

“Thy cheek is pale with thought, but not from woe;
And yet so lovely, that if mirth could flush
Its rose of whiteness with the deepest blush,
My heart would wish away that ruder glow.”

GENEVRA.

THE dresses were ordered, and the dresses were worn. The girls were presented; Gaie deported herself with as much solemnity as possible, and Lady Curzon Kellam was made happy by her Majesty's special compliments on the grace and fresh, rose-like beauty of her two young protégées.

Lady Kellam was triumphant. Young Lord Dorringbroke, the eldest hope of the Harrenleighs, was brought upon the scene, and seemed properly impressed, on the very first occasion, by the charms of Gaie. And Gaie did not say to Aunt Kellam, but only told Donna in confidence, *how* silly she thought him.

Then Sir Robert Carre was presented at an evening crush that Lady Kellam herself gave for her nieces, and when, she piqued herself, she produced all the best "partis" of the day—scarcely a younger son among them, and most of them with a seat in prospect in the Upper House.

Sir Robert Carre's admiration of Donna was a success still more encouraging, because less confidently expected, than young Dorringbroke's subjugation by Gaie. Sir Robert was evidently struck with the girl, whose manner, simple and dignified, and seemingly all unconscious of his importance, had an attraction for him different from anything he had known before.

He lingered near her all that evening at Lady Kellam's "crush," and Lord Dorringbroke hovered in the light of Gaie's laughing eyes, like a doubtful moth who has not quite made up his mind whether he will condescend to burn his wings or not.

Lady Kellam took care they made acquaintance with everybody they ought to know, and resolved in her own mind to play Lord Dorringbroke and Sir Robert, by judicious encouragement, to a certain point against other equally desirable swains.

But she took care to establish a comfortable,

motherly friendship with young Dorringbroke, pressing his arm kindly as he took her down, at her own command, to supper, and begging him, with affectionate interest, to remember that she was always at home to *special* friends for a little cosy chat at half-past five; and Lord Dorringbroke, being a young goose still only half fledged, thought Lady Kellam “the kindest woman, ’pon my honour, the very jolliest old thing conceivable; shouldn’t wonder if he did look in on her—to-morrow, perhaps, over her boudoir cup of tea.” Young Dorringbroke would have been an easily caught fish, if Lady Kellam could herself have done all the fishing.

Then Lady Kellam turned a perfectly deaf ear to all evil reports, which kind and deeply interested friends took care should duly reach her, as to the character of Sir Robert Carre: she hoped they would not reach the ears of her brother-in-law; and, meantime, endeavoured to teach Donna, with the ingenious care this difficult case required, to encourage Sir Robert, feeling that it would be, indeed, a social triumph if she landed this unimpressionable millionaire with so unpliant an instrument as Donna threatened to prove.

So it went on for some time, and the parliamentary season proceeded.

“No whirl yet, nothing to speak of,” Lady Kellam said,—“only a few drums, and afternoons, and tailed dinners: balls and breakfasts, and park and opera, were all to come in the glorious vista beyond Easter.”

And all this time Donna never managed to go to Westminster Abbey, to hear a single scientific lecture, or to visit any gallery or museum whatever.

It was towards the middle of March that Lady Kellam said, one afternoon, just as she was dropping them at their own door after a long round of visits—

“My dears—yes, let me see—I dine to-night at the Prussian Embassy, and, of course, I do not fetch you: your father takes you (late, mind; do not let him take you too early, it is so rustic and vulgar) to—where is it? Oh yes, the first reception at D—— House. I may look in last thing, but I have a whist-party at Mrs. Linton Halloway’s at eleven o’clock; but it was about to-morrow I was going to say—in the afternoon. Yes, I am going to take you to the Sarcrofts, in Laburnum Sweep. It is a queer out-of-the-way place, and an odd mixture of people; but everybody goes, so of course you must be seen there. And Gaie, love, wear your Indian silk costume

and your rose bonnet; and Donna—let me see, yes, that grey poult-de-soie suits you wonderfully,—that will do; and at half-past five, my darlings, I will call for you. Adieu.” And Aunt Kellam drove away.

“I wonder,” said Donna, as they turned into the drawing-room and sat down to chat over their cup of tea before going up-stairs to dress for dinner,—“I wonder what Aunt Kellam calls ‘odd people.’ Does it not surprise you, Gaie, to find how dull and commonplace nearly everybody is one meets?”

“Oh, Donna, I am not a blue, you know! They often amuse me.”

“But, Gaie,”—the two girls had seated themselves in low chairs and taken their tiny, ridiculous bonnets off their heads, and thrown themselves back with a languor and aspect of weariness they had never displayed in the fresh old life at home, and Gaie half closed her eyes with an amused expression as Donna went on,—“you know I used to think about London before we came here, that I should meet all sorts of wonderful people—great artists and philosophers, and those kind of men; and aunt does not seem to me to know, or care about them.”

“You did not expect to find them growing

about the streets, as Whittington expected the golden pavement, did you, Donna ? ”

“ No, not exactly that ; but I expected a different sort of people from all those we know already—great, clever men, and women, like Madame de Maintenon or Madame de Staël ; and aunt seems to me only to know duchesses and countesses, and young stupid men with titles and, what she calls, expectations.”

“ And older men—with what objections ? ” put in Gaie, laughing.

“ And older men, who talk of the opera and their French cooks, and their younger days when they say they were foolish, which I can quite believe, and anything and everything, Gaie, that one does not care one straw about ; and, oh ! it is all a terrible bore.”

“ I do not think it is so very bad,” said Gaie. “ I rather like teasing young Lord Dorringbroke ; and I think they are all very kind and nice.”

“ Oh, very ; and Aunt Kellam is so kind—only—only ; ” and she stopped. “ Gaie,” she went on, very gravely, “ do you know I heard papa and Mr. Henry Denford talking of Piers Ashton at the Premier’s last night.”

“ Did you, Donna ? ” and Gaie sat straight up-

right and fixed her eyes with questioning interest on her face.

“Yes; and I could not help listening, you know, it is so long—three years—since we have heard of him; and one cannot help being anxious and longing to hear about a friend one has known all one’s life—can we, Gaie?”

“Of course we cannot,” said Gaie, with defiance and decision.

“And then it has been so much worse since that last time papa wrote to him to Paris, remonstrating on his ways, and we got no answer, and papa became angry, and forbade us to speak of him in his presence, or even to mention his name.”

“Of course it has,” said Gaie, “it has been dreadful since then; and Aunt Kellam made papa much worse by all she said,” added Gaie, with indignation.

“Yes, of course; but if she did see Piers with those dreadful sort of people in Paris, it was natural she should repeat it; and then Count de Hauton told her he had taken up entirely with a most unsatisfactory class both of women and men. I wonder in what way he could have meant—unsatisfactory.” She looked thoughtful and concerned.

“I am sure Piers would never like anybody who was wicked,” said Gaie, in energetic defence of her old playfellow of the boats and hills.

“No,” said Donna, “not wicked exactly; but, Gaie, I wonder *who* that dark girl was that Aunt Kellam saw with him at Fontainebleau.”

“Let me see; I forget. What did she say of her?” said Gaie.

“Oh, she only saw her passing, you know. She recognised Piers, but she seemed to think his associates too extraordinary to admit of her speaking to him. She said it was one summer evening that she and the De Hautons had driven to Fontainebleau, and there was Piers sauntering through the garden, with a regular common working man in a blue shirt on one side of him and this dark girl on the other, and behind them—she went on to describe, for you remember papa was roused to interest, and asked questions—was a fair young man, and a very, very old man leaning on his arm,—all of them, she said, odd and out-of-the-way looking; so she did not speak to him. Then it was, you know, papa wrote again and never had an answer; since then, he and aunt both refuse to speak of Piers.

“What did you hear last night, Donna?”

“Oh, it was mostly political—about the pro-

spects in France, and the murder of Victor Noir, and the Plébiscite ; then they went on to talk of the 'Universal,'—you know, the society Piers wrote about ; and they abused it very much, and papa looked very grave, and shook his head, and said something about Piers. He deplored him, and said he was misguided and obstinate to a lamentable degree. I wonder if Piers will ever come right, Gaie."

"I am sure he will."

"And oh ! how I do wonder where he is !"

"There is no use wondering ; and, oh, Donna, there is papa coming in with his latch-key ; and it is more than twenty minutes since the dressing-bell rang."

"Well," said Donna, rising, "to return to the subject we started with, nearly all Aunt Kellam's 'set,' as she calls them, bore me almost beyond endurance ; and I must say I have some hope from her evident opinion of the party at Laburnum Sweep,—who knows ? they may be sufficiently queer and unconventional to be interesting, as they are odd enough to be disapproved of by her. Let us be off to dress,—we shall keep papa waiting ; and to-morrow I shall be all expectation for Laburnum Sweep."

CHAPTER XXI.

“When a woman becomes dissatisfied with her rights in art, it happens just as when she is dissatisfied with her rights in life. She struggles, and fails or succeeds, and becomes exceptional—in fact, a monster. I acknowledge that a woman may have genius, but I would have her calm, holy, wise, fit to worship as she is meet to love.”

RODOMANT.

DONNA was not far wrong in her estimate and expectation of Laburnum Sweep, or of that particular house in the Sweep to which, next afternoon, at five o'clock, Lady Kellam conducted her and Gaie.

Laburnum Sweep is a row of quaint, old-fashioned residences, away beyond the familiar precincts of west-end London, in the Battersea direction, beyond the river, beyond the huge gas-works, beyond an infinitude of dreary suburban abodes of the humblest and most unattractive nature. You pass all these in driving to Laburnum Sweep, but you left all behind you when you reached it. Laburnum Sweep itself is a

charming old place. The houses seem to stand in large undulating parks of their own, so carefully are their roofs and chimneys screened one from the other by the fine old trees. The nightingales sing in these trees in the summer evenings; and the gardens surrounding each house are beautiful.

They drove down the Sweep under the shadow of large old trees with low-hanging branches; they turned in at a gateway, round a bit of smooth lawn, and up to the door of an old square-built house, with new bow-windows and conservatory, and queer rooms stuck on indiscriminately on every side. Lady Kellam gathered her skirts together and said, "Now, my dears, you first, please;" and they realised that they had reached Mrs. Sarcroft's door.

"They give charming strawberry parties in the summer-time here," said Lady Kellam again, as she got out of her carriage. "Of course, at this season anything out of doors is impossible."

And so it was. Outside the prospect was chill and dreary enough—leafless trees, a bare sward, black flower-borders, a frosty-looking gravel path, and, far away behind the old elms and the quaint-looking brick house, a crimson February London sunset, glowing and lurid, in the western sky.

Donna glanced round her for a moment, as she paused, and then followed her aunt into the house.

They entered first a low, old-fashioned hall. It looked dusky in the half-twilight of the afternoon, but warm and comfortable. A large fire burning brightly in a huge open fireplace on one side threw its reflection over the quaint furnishing, upon the stars of curious antique weapons high upon the walls, upon pictures, busts and medallions, cases of old coins and miniatures, and on the large bureaux covered with antique silver and old Indian faïence standing on each side.

“The Sarcrofts are great connoisseurs in ‘objets d’art,’ you know,” said Lady Kellam, indifferently, as the girls paused to look around them, and both exclaimed with delight,—“fond of bric-à-brac of all descriptions. Come away, my dears. Lady Curzon Kellam and the Miss Graemes,” she added in pompous tone to the servant as she shook out her skirts.

A door was opened instantly on one side the fireplace, their names were loudly uttered upon the threshold, and the two girls, following their aunt closely, found themselves in a large room, lighted softly by numberless pink-shaded lamps, and full from end to end with a dense

crowd of people talking, laughing, sauntering to and fro, drinking tea and coffee, examining the beautiful prints and sketches that covered the walls, peering into Mrs. Sarcroft's renowned aquarium, and admiring her magnificent show of heaths and camelias in the conservatory that opened off the room; amusing and enjoying themselves with the ease and success which always distinguished Mrs. Sarcroft's receptions at Laburnum Sweep.

It is not everybody who can give amusing strawberry parties and winter afternoon "drums" at which people never find themselves bored; but Mrs. Sarcroft could, and the only apparent key to her success lay in the one fact of the utter disregard of conventionality, congruity, or any other social consideration with which she brought extraordinary varieties and contrasts of people together with astonishing recklessness and courage.

People always knew they would meet some one worth meeting at Mrs. Sarcroft's house; and people always knew that when they got there they would feel themselves in a society sufficiently clever, interesting, and varied to call out in everybody their best and most brilliant qualities; and people had a habit at Mrs. Sarcroft's of being as brilliant as they could. She was not in the least

a lion-hunter, though probably she knew most people worthy of the name of "lion" in London or even in Europe.

At her summer garden-parties and her winter afternoons might be seen, from time to time, nearly every distinguished man in politics or art, and nearly every woman distinguished for beauty or any other charm. They all came; and they all found an element of ease, simplicity, and enjoyment without effort, that was due certainly to the perfection of their hostess in her hospitable art. Nobody came to Mrs. Sarcroft's in their character of "lion;" everybody felt they came as *her* special friend; it was a way she had—something in her smile, her ease, her grace, in that mysterious power of ubiquity by which every guest departed with the impression that she had been constantly and especially devoted to him or to her. Beautiful art; and truly admirable in her case, because it flowed from a genuine kindness of heart, and from that perfection of high breeding by which, as hostess, she seemed to carry in her interest and recollection every guest, from the humblest to the noblest, in her crowded rooms. Mrs. Sarcroft was not in the least a humbug; there was no limit to the real pleasure with which she welcomed her unlimited friends.

Her history had been curious and varied. The daughter of a man high up in the British diplomatic service, she had lived in a prominent position in nearly every capital of Europe. Then—she had married a poor man for love, and her position had altered.

Her husband was a handsome, artistic being, a collector of bric-à-brac—a great authority on old inscriptions on antique silver, china, or prints. He was wandering about the room at that moment, bending his Raphael-like head in attention to the remarks of a famous art-critic (who walked beside him) upon his own last importation from Rome.

He had an uncomfortable way of spending all his spare money on these kind of possessions—interesting, certainly, but sometimes practically unsubstantial—and Mrs. Sarcroft often said, with her merry laugh, that she daily expected that “Theodore would buy her out of house and home.” She never would be surprised, she used to say, to find herself sitting on the steps of Trafalgar Square, or of the Sistine at Rome, without roof to cover her, without dinner in prospect, and possessed of the finest collection of Albert Dürers and Capo di Monte in Europe!

Fortunately they had no children, so she did

not much care. She did without a new gown when Theodore wanted an old teacup ; and she filled her house with the best society in London at an expenditure small enough to leave a margin for his beloved artist-proofs.

“Sympathy of tastes, Theodore darling,” she used to say, when the bills came in at Christmas, and she had to forego her new winter velveteen to pay for the household coals ; and Theodore would acquiesce, and sigh, as he touched with caressing tenderness a tiny antique milk-jug for which he had just given a cheque for forty guineas.

“Sympathy of tastes, my love, on bread and butter is better than contention with—how does it finish, Theodore ?”

“A stalled ox,” he would suggest in an absent tone.

“With *pâté de foie gras*,” she would state conclusively, as more appropriate to the case, and then go on her way.

She did not fare so badly after all, Christmas bills and everything taken into account. Nobody ever got so many presents, so many hampers from the country, so many Christmas-boxes from numberless absent and never forgetful friends. So, as long as the coal account was just met, and no more,

and the baker not kept waiting at his monthly round, little Mrs. Sarcroft cared not a straw.—Pleasant, bright, charming little woman !

Lady Kellam returned her warm greeting with a manner thawed to friendliness in spite of herself. Gaie smiled with radiant brightness from every dimple round her pretty lips, as Mrs. Sarcroft looked into her face with undisguised admiration ; and Donna felt the warm little hand clasp hers, and answered Mrs. Sarcroft's expression of pleasure at their introduction with a feeling of interest and enjoyment quite genuine and delightful.

“You must have heaps of friends,” she exclaimed, glancing round, as she still held Donna's hand with a soft, light clasp. “Let me see—ah, yes ! Lady Kellam has found the Duchess of Arrowby. I must tell Theodore to take them some tea ; and, ah ! she is beckoning to you, dear,—she wants to present you. But I will come and fetch you presently : I cannot leave you there. I have a lot of young people playing something ridiculous in the other room. I will come for you in a minute.”

And before the introduction to the old Duchess (a very important acquaintance for young *débütantes*) was quite completed, back she came again.

Donna was answering the stately old lady's shrewd questions, and standing in front of her, under the scrutiny of the quick-searching eyes; so Mrs. Sarcroft could not interrupt them, but she seized upon Gaie.

"Come away, dear child," she said: "why should *you* be boxed up with the artistic and literary elders here? Come into the other room. Do you not hear them laughing? Quite shocking! I must go in to keep order. They have got Carlo Robbins and Arthur Brown in there, and a lot of young nephews of Theodore's—Guardsmen—only boys, you know; and they have beguiled Lucy Errington and Helen Percy in, too—what will the Duchess say?—and some other girls; and I do believe they are playing Dumb Crambo! Let us go in and look: it will be worth while to see Carlo Robbins, with his enormous height, doing his part. I'll be bound he will choose to act the baby!"

It was certainly great fun in the other room, where the two young comic actors vied with each other to keep up the ball, and where they found the greatest sculptor of the day playing a rebellious schoolboy, and a well-known man, whose brain was publicly supposed to be encrusted with the dust of cuneiform stones and

Egyptian hieroglyphics, joining with mirth and laughter in the effort to reduce his row of short-trowsered six-foot high school-children to order.

Mrs. Sarcroft stood in fits of laughter at the door, and Gaie soon caught the spirit of it, and in a very few minutes found herself joining the game, and adding to the merriment the sunny radiance of her own bright smiles and the musical echo of her happy laughter. "Odd people, certainly!" as Lady Kellam with some justice had said; but most of them people *great* enough not to fear any injury to their dignity by joining in the hearty merriment of the young party there.

Meanwhile, Donna, soon abandoned to her own devices, while the Duchess and Lady Kellam plunged into confidential discourse, glanced round her as she stood in the crowd, and took in the curious, brilliant scene. She scarcely knew any one near her, and many all through the rooms, indeed, were strangers to her. She saw here and there familiar faces of people from Lady Kellam's particular set, with whom she had already made acquaintance—boring, conventional, narrow-minded people, who wandered among this curious throng, and looked like birds from a different clime. But they were only a

small sprinkling ; and the numberless faces, old and young, dark and fair, nearly all with an unmistakably artistic or intellectual look about them, were all unknown to her.

Mrs. Sarcroft, leaving Gaie happy in the other room, had come back, and flitted now in every corner among her guests. She glanced towards Donna, and saw her still standing by her aunt—detained by her, and speaking still to the Duchess, as she imagined ; so Mrs. Sarcroft turned her thoughts to other guests.

And presently—Donna saw her walk up the room, holding by one hand a lady, whose appearance seemed to attract some considerable attention as she passed along. Mrs. Sarcroft brought her close to where Donna stood, and, approaching a tall old man, touched him lightly on the arm and said—

“ Mr. Deptford, I wish to present you to a lady.”

The old gentleman smiled his willingness, and bowed low.

“ Mr. Deptford—Miss Catharine Proute,” said Mrs. Sarcroft distinctly. “ I do not think I need say more in introduction ;” and then she stepped back a little, as the old gentleman bowed again, and a curious quizzical smile curled the corners

of her lips as she watched the lady she had presented to him, and as her eye caught the astonishment in the expression of Donna's face, just opposite to her, across the group.

Mr. Deptford's politeness was quite surprising, and he murmured something about "distinguished honour" as he raised his head again. But, strange to say, over his face there passed also a quick gleam of irrepressible humour as the lady answered his profound salute.

"Well, I guess we ought to be acquainted," she said, responding with a slight nod as he bowed before her, and running her ungloved fingers through a crop of short curly dark hair. "I have got a whole heap of authenticated letters for you in my bag, *sir*," she said.

"Quite unnecessary, Miss Proute; your name is sufficient introduction."

"Well, of course you are our Consul-general; no mistake about that, Mr. Deptford, and rationally I look for support and countenance, *sir*, to you. But you may as well just cast your eye over these letters. Jonathan A. Davy, and Robinson C. Sprot, and most of the members of Congress have put their names to the bottom of them; I can tell you that, *sir*, and no mistake about it."

“I do not doubt it for a moment,” he answered. “I shall be delighted to receive my compatriots’ letters. Will you allow me to save you the trouble of conveying them to me, by sending my servant for them to-morrow morning?”

“Well, suppose you do. I aint got any six-foot flunkies along with *me*. I hang out, of course, at the Langham. No end of a lot of us there; and there aint anybody to run messages, that I can get hold of, but a little bit of a ‘buttons,’ and I should not like to trust the President’s letters exactly to them. So suppose you send round.”

“With pleasure; and suppose you come round and do myself and Mrs. Deptford the honour of dining with us to-morrow. She is not able, I regret to say, to be here and make your acquaintance.”

“To-morrow, Consul? Eh, feed with you to-morrow?—let me see;” and Miss Proute pulled out a thick black leather pocket-book and proceeded to examine her engagements. “It must be sharp six, then, Consul. I have to give it to them at St. George’s Hall at eight o’clock afterwards. Will you attend?” she added presently, as she shut up her book with a loud clap and crammed it into her pocket.

“To-morrow night, I fear I must beg to be excused. I have an official engagement I must meet late in the evening.”

“Well, quite so; of course, business first, pleasure second, Consul; no doubt about that.”

“Of the pleasure I am fated to lose, I have not the slightest doubt,” he said, bowing again.

“Well, you are very polite to say that much, Consul; but *I* do not know. I am going to give them a turn of poetry to-morrow night—let them hear a little how their own authors should be read.”

“Ah! a poetical reading you give to-morrow evening, really; nothing of your own? Will you not let the London public have the valuable privilege of hearing you speak?”

“Well, I have the fancy on, you see, to spout Byron a bit to them, and a scene or two perhaps of the *Merchant of Venice*. Then I may give them a taste from our side—Emerson or Edgar Poe. It is wonderful how it all goes down—Poe especially, Consul; the public never do get tired of that ‘Croaking Raven’ of his—

“‘Once upon a midnight dreary,
As I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many an old and ancient volume of forgotten lore.’”

Something had influenced her genius suddenly, and in low solemn sepulchral accents she recited, just under the Consul's politely bending countenance, these thrilling lines.

A murmur ran through the room.

The ghost-like echo of her voice had penetrated. People looked round, opened their eyes, tittered softly, and stared amazed, as Miss Proute paused in her recitation, clasped her hands together, and looked up with a fixed gaze of her great round eyes into her Minister's face.

Mrs. Sarcroft clapped her hands.

"Charming!" she exclaimed, with a most culpable affectation of enjoyment; "delightful, Miss Proute! Do recite us something."

The great woman glanced round with a stern tragical solemnity, still standing with clasped hands before the embarrassed Consul. She nodded gravely twice with mysterious emphasis to Mrs. Sarcroft; she stuck out one foot under the short-cut skirt of her pink gown, and in yet more sepulchral tones she continued—

"Suddenly, there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping—
Rapping at my chamber-door."

Straight on through the whole poem she went, while profound silence fell upon the whole party;

and with strangely mingled expressions of astonishment and amusement every eye was turned upon her face.

It is impossible to describe the deep heaving of her chest, as with heart-rending pathos, and in those sepulchral tones, she uttered the mystic "Leonore," or the sigh with which she murmured "Nothing more"—"Leonore and Nothing more."

A burst of applause, led by mischievous Mrs. Sarcroft, of course followed the recitation; and then people could turn to each other, shrug their shoulders, liberate their suppressed sense of amusement, and ask each other who, in Heaven's name, she was.

"Not know her!" Nearly everybody was impressed with their neighbour's ignorance, for about one half of the party knew something of America, and had heard of her before. Of course she was the great American female speaker, recited in public, made money for the Woman's Cause in general, and made wonderful speeches on Woman's Rights.

Donna heard this explanation quite close to her, as she still watched the lady, and heard her extraordinary outpour of eccentric eloquence now, as some one set her off on her "Woman's

Rights," and a feeling of strong disgust rose within Donna's heart at the whole question of rights and freedom and higher education, everything as regarded a woman, as she heard Miss Proute's noisy dissertation upon it now.

"She is awfully clever," a gentleman was saying in a low drawling voice to an inquiring lady just at Donna's side. "Suppose some fellow of the Barnum sort has brought her over. They get up these sort of show-sppeechifiers now on the other side the water, just as they do revived mummies and Siamese twins. Woman's Cause, indeed! She preaches away, and, I dare say, has sold the whole speculation to some rascally Yankee, who will make a pot of money and run away without paying her a sou."

"But that is not what she professes," said the lady in answer, "and of course it is not the real state of the case. You are telling me a naughty wicked story, Mr. de Burgh."

"Well, perhaps I am," he answered laughing. "I only mean, that is what I always consider the English of these Yankee speechifyings must be; but I believe I am wrong in this case, for she really has letters of introduction, and is the genuine article. Look at her well, Lady Caroline: she is a good specimen, after all, of the

real thing—what you are all to come to, you know, when we cave in—the regular strong-minded, learned, free and independent *citoyenne*. Nice, is it not?” he drawled out in soft ironical tones. “What much nicer wives we shall have!” he added, turning his eyes with tender meaning into the fair young face by his side.

“And what nicer husbands you will make!” she answered, laughing; and then the pair sauntered down the room together to continue their skirmish in the conservatory, and Donna was left again to contemplate the group, still clustering thick, still quivering with suppressed amusement, round the American champion of Woman’s Rights and powers.

CHAPTER XXII.

“For through thy long dark lashes low depending,
The soul of sympathetic gentleness
Gleams like a seraph from the sky descending,
Above all pain, and pitying all distress ;
At once such majesty with sweetness blending,
I worship more, but cannot love the less.”

GENEVRA.

VERY curious thoughts were chasing each other through her young mind, as Donna watched this heroine of the new school, this genuine specimen, as she had been called, of woman emancipated, self-dependent, highly educated, as far as literary knowledge and acquirement meant education ; a woman such as she had often pictured to herself in a very different form.

A woman, the realization of that dream of womanhood, that could give denial to the masculine accusation of feebleness and inefficiency of mental force.

“Quite an exceptional woman !” she had heard people call her all round, and at the expression

her mind had travelled back to a long ago summer-evening controversy with Piers.

They sat together by the brook-side on the hill above the Old Towers, and on that occasion she remembered she had been roused by his cool cynical way of condemning her sex, and, quite provoked, she had answered him by citing the long list of De Staels, D'Arblays, Maintenons, the Sisters Berry, and the numberless women whose names, distinguished for wit, literary accomplishment, and mental power, lit up every reign of English and French history.

And he had said, "Ah, these are exceptional women, of course." And here at last she beheld one.

"Quite an exceptional woman—wonderfully clever," people called her in Donna's hearing on every side.

The girl's face was shadowed with its own characteristic expression of profound and perplexed thought as she watched the American, and she felt a thrill of horror and the cold chill of disappointed enthusiasm enter her heart. Her expression, so grave and abstracted as it quickly became, caught at that moment the bright observing eyes of Mrs. Sarcroft. She detected Donna standing silent and alone. Her hostess's

kind anxious instinct was roused immediately : she remembered her young guest was a stranger, and she feared she might be dull ; besides, the sweet earnest face attracted her. She came across the room.

“ Will you not sit down, dear ? ” she said, with a soft pretty fall of her voice upon the caressing epithet, quite peculiar to her winning little self, as she laid her hand on Donna’s arm. “ I see old Lord Henry Russell has got hold of your aunt, and he will not let her off for a long time to come,—he always has such a quantity to say ; besides, there is a new scandal just given out, and she will have to hear all about it. But, fie ! I forgot, you know nothing, dear child, about such wicked tales. Come here.”

And she drew Donna gently down the room with her.

“ Ah, here is a seat : you have stood such a long time. This will do charmingly : room for you by my own sweetest friend. Let me introduce you, Miss Graeme (our last charming *débutante*, dear madame) ; and, Miss Graeme, let me present you to—*Madame Prioleau*. You will like her so much, dear,” she whispered to Donna ; “ charming,—*quite* an exceptional woman, I assure you.”

In consequence of this last explanatory sentence, Donna sat down with considerable reluctance, and turned with much misgiving to this, yet another new acquaintance she was called upon to make; and she said nothing; she was unwilling for the introduction. But it was inevitable. Mrs. Sarcroft insisted; Donna had to acquiesce. So, very ungraciously and with much reluctance, she was obliged to sit down and to turn her eyes upon this other "exceptional woman's" face. As she looked,—she never could quite explain to herself what the impression was,—but, her sentiments seemed instantly to change; a feeling of repose and refreshment seemed to creep over her, and her gaze lingered in a silence long and most unusual between two people just introduced—a silence on both sides, for Madame Prioleau too was looking at her with a kind of half-puzzled expression of inquiry in her beautiful grey eyes—an expression as if trying to remember something, as if an association was coming back to her, and she could not quite tell what it was.

Then at last, quite suddenly, she put out her firm gentle hand and laid it upon Donna's with a warm clasp.

"Yes, I am sure," she said, without further

preface or commentary, "it *must* be. Miss Graeme, are you very like your father?"

Donna answered brightly, somehow without feeling any great astonishment; it seemed so natural and easy to answer that speaking sympathetic face.

"Yes," she said, "I am exactly like all the Graemes; and every one says I am just the image of papa."

"How curious," Madame Prioleau continued, taking the girl's hand into the clasp of both her own. "And did not your father travel in America in the year '41, with two other young Englishmen; and did they not come down to the Southern States and stay at Illinois, Miss Graeme?"

"Papa did go to America, I know," said Donna, "but it was before he married; and Mr. Derrington, his great friend, went with him and others, I think; and I have often heard him talk of Illinois, and the kindness they met with there."

"I knew it was the same: he visited us," said Madame Prioleau. "You are wonderfully like him. I never forget a face, and above all I should not easily forget his. Ah!" she added, sighing, "I was very young then; and that was such a bright beautiful winter he spent in our house.

We all talk still in Illinois of him, the brave kind Englishman, who was such a favourite with old and young."

"How very curious!" said Donna, looking still with a sense of strong interest into Madame Prioleau's face. "How pleased papa will be to see you again."

"I am sure he will be all unchanged in his kindly friendship," she answered. "I know Englishmen never do change in friendship and never forget. It will be pleasant to talk over old-day stories with him, though, alas! you are too young," she added, stopping herself in the saddening tendency of her tone—"you are too young to understand how melancholy may be the retrospect towards an acquaintance of so long ago."

"I can well imagine it," Donna answered, "for even papa, you know——" she hesitated.

"Yes, yes," replied Madame Prioleau, "he has found and lost again his life's best treasure since then. But it makes me happy to meet you, dear child, and to see how richly the place has been filled."

"Papa is quite happy now, I think," said Donna; "he is so fond of Gaie and me."

"No doubt of it; and I shall be able to bring myself to his recollection without rousing memo-

ries too painful at all events to him. And it pleases me to hear it, for I almost feared——He was engaged to your dear mother, my child, when he was with us in Illinois, and I well remember the happy ‘badinage’ over the advent of every post.”

“How wonderful it seems,” said Donna, her eyes still lingering upon the calm earnest countenance of Madame Prioleau; “ten minutes ago only I was introduced to you, and now I feel—I seem to know you much better than any one in this room,—better than any one I have met since I came to London.”

It did seem strange to Donna; but she did not know that she was speaking to one whose rare wonderful gift was that of winning her way to a heart’s confidence in short transient moments of time. She did not know that this quick human sympathy, tender and sensitive, was the divine-like gift that made *this* woman exceptional. She did not know that the same quiet gaze that entered her heart now with a sweet thrill of awakening love had won many a wounded soul to a like strong confidence, reposeful and full of gladdening peace, on many a woful battle-field, on many a low hospital bed, when the racked and heart-laden sufferer had but these few minutes to live.

That was Madame Prioleau's gift, rare, wonderful, and almost divine. Her heart thrilled with a passion of human sympathy, that, gleaming from her quiet eyes, wept with every human sufferer, and made every human grief her own.

"Will you come and see papa?" said Donna presently.

"Gladly, if I may; and will you come and see me, Miss Graeme? I do not like to think our acquaintance is to be limited to crowded meetings like this."

"Oh, may I?" exclaimed Donna.

"Certainly; I shall look forward to seeing you with pleasure indeed. I feel—I am very quick in those things, you know—I feel we shall suit each other, and be friends. We think a great deal of instinctive sympathies in our theorizing America, you know."

"Are you American?" repeated Donna, suddenly, with a ring of disappointment and dissatisfaction in her tone.

"Of course I am. Did you not know it? Did I not say it was in my old American home I knew your father? I am a Southerner,—from the States."

"Ah! of course, I forgot," said Donna again. "But," she paused hesitatingly, her eyes wan-

dering from Madame Prioleau's face to the knot at the other side of the room, where Miss Catharine Proute on "Woman's Privilege" was still engaged in loud harangue.

Madame Prioleau caught the direction of her eyes, and laughed softly.

"She is an American, too," said Donna, in a perplexed and apologetic tone.

Madame Prioleau laughed again, with a quiet gleam of merriment at Donna's dissatisfaction.

"Yes ; an American, and a very good type of her class."

"But not a lady ?" said Donna.

"Well, you know, here on this side of the world, a lady, to your tastes and instincts, means just a certain stereotyped standard of refinement. She is not a lady, as you see, in that external sense ; but in the main—well, it might be wrong to stigmatise her as the reverse—she has no vulgar ideas or tendencies of character ; on the contrary, she has an exalted standard, morally speaking, of feminine merit, and, mentally speaking, she is very accomplished, and highly taught."

"Yes," said Donna, in tones of the direst discontent. "But I am so disappointed. I so wished to know one ; indeed, I do not know that I did not want to be one myself."

“What? — a strong-minded Yankee, dear child?”

The mobile sensitive young face did not suggest this.

“No; but an exceptional woman: they all call her clever,—is she not so?—and accomplished even, you say; and as to education, she seems to know everything—and——”

“To a certain degree you must grant her success.”

“Yes; that is the dreadful part of it. If that is what a woman must be, in order to assert herself, or have individual character, and exercise the influence she ought, well——”

“You would rather be ignorant and without influence—accused of being without strength of character, would you not?”

“I do not know what I would choose,” said Donna presently, “but I could not bear to be like —her.”

“I should like to hear a great deal more of what you would choose to be and do, dear child,” said Madame Prioleau gently. “When will you come to see me?—to-morrow?”

“If I may; oh! I should like it!” said Donna earnestly, turning towards the fine soft face again. “Oh! if you let me, I should so like it. When may I come?”

“To-morrow, about five. Come in and have tea with me. But stay, you do not know where I live. There—I have written it down for you. My tiny house is just at the corner of Tilney Street, as you turn in by the Chesterfield Gardens to Mayfair. Is not this your aunt coming to us?”

“Yes; and here is Gaie, my sister, Madame Prioleau; you must know her, too.” And Donna sprang up with unusual energy and eagerness; and at that moment Lady Kellam, with Mrs. Sarcroft, approached them, and Madame Prioleau was presented to Donna’s aunt and chaperone.

Then Gaie was brought to her, and she looked with bright admiration and interest into the fair blooming face; and she thought her radiant and beautiful, but she did not touch the sympathy and interest of Madame Prioleau quite so quickly as Donna had done.

“My dear children, I must run away with you,” said Lady Kellam, when her civilities with Madame Prioleau had been exchanged. “I have to dine to-night with the Bishop of D——. Good-bye, *dear* Madame Prioleau, and Mrs. Sarcroft, *adieu*.”

“Ah, a few minutes, dear Lady Kellam,” pleaded Mrs. Sarcroft. “Do not rob us so early of your

two lovely girls. The room will have lost its chief ornaments, I assure you, when you are gone. Stay just a few minutes."

"A thousand regrets," persisted Lady Kellam. "But the Bishop's dinner; and I know it is nearly seven, and I have to drive the two girls home before I go on to Brook Street to dress. I must go."

"Ah, I am so sorry!—and my two young travellers still to come. Such charming young men, I assure you: I cannot think what makes them so late. The young Frenchman is quite distinguished; so interesting,—he has really been everywhere."

"Who are they?" said Lady Kellam, pausing with some little curiosity. She thought she knew every one distinguished or worth knowing, at least by name, in town.

"Oh," continued Mrs. Sarcroft, "they have just arrived—returned from Persia just now, I believe. I met them in Syria a year ago. Madame Prioleau knows them. You remember, dear madame, Orestes and Pylades, eh? They are coming here, I am in hopes, this evening still. Oh, you know one, at all events, Lady Kellam—Mr. ——— *Dear* Duchess, you are not going to leave us?"

And little Mrs. Sarcroft had to break off in her explanation, and rush away for a moment, to clasp the hand of the grim old Duchess of Arroby in a tender farewell.

Lady Curzon Kellam took the opportunity of slipping away. She really had that dinner at the Bishop's to overtake, and there was no saying when Mrs. Sarcroft would return. So she forgot her interest in the two unknown and mysterious young travellers, and she signed to her nieces to follow her from the room.

Another moment, and they had passed through the beautiful old hall again; they were shut into her swinging chariot, and were driving swiftly home.

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